BUSINESS / B2-1

Why RP's top business schools are not at par with world's best

ENTERTAINMENT / E1

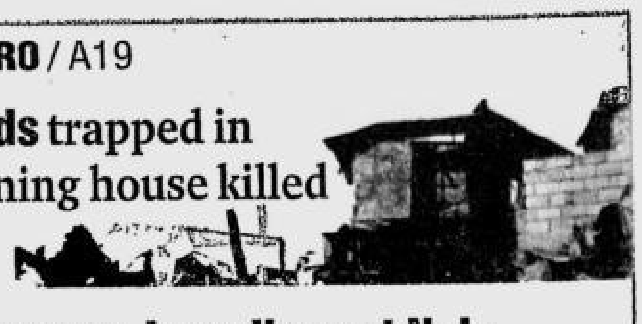
Fernando: Cooperation, not abolition, is answer to MMFF problems

WORLD / A22

Democrat majority in US Congress to fight for an end to Iraq war

METRO / A19

5 kids trapped in burning house killed



Some instant heroes find fame unbearable

MAHIRAP DIN PALA MAGING SIKAT!

NEW YORK—DANIEL Santos became an instant hero in 1996 when he jumped 39 meters off a bridge into the Hudson River to rescue a young woman trying to commit suicide.

SOME/ A5

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Monday, January 8, 2007 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 31 P18 website: inquirer.net

Long lines at Naia irk foreign airlines

By Nikko Dizon

AIRLINE COMPANIES OPERATING OUT OF THE Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) are blaming the long queues at the departure immigration counters and a defective baggage facility for the delays in outbound flights.

Officials of the Airline Operators Council (AOC) said that given the "deluge in passen-

LONG/ A4

Indon JI terrorist slain in Tawi-Tawi

Navy says Dulmatin aide among 6 dead

AN INDONESIAN MEMBER OF THE AL-QAIDA-linked Jemaah Islamiyah was among six militants killed at the weekend in a sea clash with Philippine troops off the country's southern frontier, an official said yesterday.

The Philippine Army, Navy and Marines were involved in Saturday's gun battle that killed the six militants aboard a motorboat off Tawi-Tawi, Navy spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Giovanni Carlo Bacordo said.

Indonesian terrorist suspect Gufran, who used only one name and allegedly belonged to the Indonesian-based militant group Jemaah Islamiyah, was among the dead, Bacordo said.

Five Filipino members of the Abu Sayyaf, a group also thought to have links to al-Qaida, also were killed, he said.

Gufran was a key aide of Dulmatin, a top Indonesian terror suspect who has been hunted by troops in a monthlong US-backed offensive on Jolo island, he said.

Gufran's reported death bolstered military reports that Indonesian militants had taken refuge in the southern Philippines—the scene of a decades-old Moro separatist insurgency.

Philippine authorities reported on Saturday that among the Filipino militants killed was Judnam Jamalul. Jamalul, alias Black Killer, was among 17 Abu Sayyaf bandits, including the group's chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani, wanted by the United States for attacks on American citizens.

US and Philippine authorities had offered a reward of P1 million for the capture of Jamalul, whose group was said to be involved in the taking of more than a dozen hostages in 2000 from the Malaysian resort of Sipadan.

Another ranking Abu Sayyaf

INDON JI/ A8

No important policy shift seen in May polls

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

ON THE SECOND DAY OF THEIR takeover of the 110th US Congress on Thursday, the new Democratic leadership blasted plans of President George W. Bush to increase the 140,000 American troops already in Iraq by 8,000 to 9,000.

In a letter sent to Bush on Friday, newly elected House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid flexed the muscles of the new Democratic majority by urging him to begin pulling troops out of Iraq in four to six months. (*See story in World, Page A22.*)

They also asked Bush to begin shifting the mission of US forces in Iraq from combat to training and logistical support of the Iraqis.

"We are well past the point of more troops for Iraq," Pelosi and Reid wrote in an attempt to seize the initiative from Bush even as the president was preparing to announce this week a new war strategy in Iraq, where US troop fatalities had increased to more than 3,000.

NO IMPORTANT/ A5

VIGILANCE against corruption is also needed to realize the Filipino soldier's dream of modernization. EDWIN BACASMAS

PROGRAM SETBACKS

AFP modernization drive sputters

By Yvonne Chua and Luz Rimban
Contributors

(First of three parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL LUZON—In the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains, Army soldiers are on a mission to "achieve strategic defeat of the communist terrorist movement" in three years, just as their Commander in Chief has ordered.

But the soldiers wish they had helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to conduct air strikes, thermal-imaging weapons and night-vision goggles to locate the enemy in mountainous terrain even at night, bulletproof vests and helmets to protect soldiers' "fatal body parts," and secure, lightweight all-weather radios for quick contact with army base.

That's all in their dreams. In their makeshift base, the soldiers

AFP/ A6

2 senators praise VFA official for quitting post

By TJ Burgonio

THE OUTSPOKEN EXECUTIVE director of the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom) has done an "honorable thing" by resigning from the government, two administration senators said yesterday.

Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes' resignation, however, had no effect on VFACom operations, Sen. Joker Arroyo said. If at all, it would boost the relations between Malacañang and the Senate on the VFA, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said.

But in view of Malacañang's flip-flopping, Arroyo demanded that the administration make up its mind on whether it wanted the VFA reviewed or not.

After riling Malacañang over his open criticism of the transfer of convicted rapist US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith back to US custody, Paredes said Saturday he was quitting his post and would be submitting his resignation letter this week.

"He resigns; it's accepted because he could not agree with Malacañang. That's an honorable course for him to take. That should serve as an example to officialdom," Arroyo said in an interview.

"They could not get along; a parting of ways inevitably follows. Nothing unusual about it."

"That's good," said Santiago, who had frequently tangled with Paredes over differences of opinion and sought the VFACom's abolition because its functions supposedly overlapped with those of the Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA (Lovfa) which she chairs.

"That's the honorable thing to do. If his conscience does not allow him to toe the administration line, he will simply have to get out of government because he's an appointive government official," she said in an interview.

The senator, however, offered a theory on Paredes' resignation: "Either he was asked to resign or threatened with termination."

"If he wants to cross swords with the administration, he has to resign and join the opposition. There he can ventilate his opinion and policy with freedom," she added.

Paredes met with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita on Friday to relay his decision to quit and recalled saying his further stay in office was "untenable" be-

2 SENATORS/ A8

YOUNG DEVOTEES
Two children help devotees wipe their scarves and towels on the image of the Black Nazarene in front of the Quiapo Church. The 400th anniversary of the Black Nazarene will be celebrated tomorrow. ERIK ARAZAS

RP loss, US gain: Did nurse Elmer do right?

NEW YORK—THE HOSPITAL LOBBY IS a blur of surgical scrubs as a shift-change approaches. But when Elmer Jacinto slips in early in pressed whites and sneakers, he draws barely a glance from the guard behind the security desk.

It's 2:15 p.m. and soon he'll begin preparing IV drips and checking temperatures, tasks assigned to an entry-level nurse. Except for the fact that he's one of only two male nurses on the floor at St. Vincent's Midtown Hospital, he's just one of the girls.

Well, here, anyway.

But a world away, in his native Philippines, Jacinto remains at the center of a roiling controversy—a sellout to his critics, a paragon of hard work and admirable ambition to his supporters.

Once upon a time, Elmer Jacinto was the Philippines' most promising young doctor. But doctors in his homeland are

RP LOSS/ A17

DOCTOR-TURNED-NURSE Elmer Jacinto does his hospital rounds. AP

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Visayas and Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with light rainshowers.
SOURCE. PAGASA

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/07/07

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Second FRONT PAGE

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RP: Summit to make Asean relevant

By Christine O. Avendaño

DESPITE CRITICISMS OVER THE RELEVANCE of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), the Philippine government is hopeful this year's summit would see the 10-member regional grouping working closer to further strengthen the association.

"All the Asean member-countries as well as our dialogue partners are committed to making this year a moment of glory for regional stability and security," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said yesterday.

In keeping with this year's summit theme of a "One Caring, One Sharing Community," Bunye said all Southeast and East Asian countries were prepared to unite and work on their problems that include "imbalances in trade, poverty, environmental degradation, conflict and insecurity, terrorism, transnational crime and other issues that affect a region that spans half the world."

Asean leaders and their East Asian dialogue partners are heading to Cebu this week for the Jan. 10-15 meetings which were postponed last month due to an approaching typhoon.

But ahead of the summit, a ranking Singaporean official had warned that Asean must change or become irrelevant.

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar said Asean as an organization must reinvent itself or it "will atrophy and become marginalized."

Critics accuse the disparate group—whose members range from wealthy Singapore to the impoverished communist nation of Laos—of being a "talking shop" that accomplishes little.

"Up to now, it has been a talking shop," said Sinapan Samydorai of Think Centre, a Singapore nongovernmental organization.

"A talking shop's not a bad thing if they are talking about things of substance," chimed in Damien Kingsbury, an associate professor at Australia's Deakin University.

"But they don't talk about things in a constructive way or a way that is likely to lead to some sort of further development."

The 40-year-old association has also been strongly criticized for its failure to act against abuses, especially those involving military-ruled member Burma (Myanmar).

Asean, founded in August 1967, comprises the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Burma, Laos and Cambodia.

In Cebu, the bloc aims to sign a deal that would accelerate the formation of a regional single market to fight off competition from China.

Asean wants the target date for the single market advanced to 2015 from 2020, but analysts have noted that the region faces challenges in making a European-style single market work.

"It's still a dream," Asean Secretary General Ong Keng Yong admitted.

Critics also say Asean's cherished principle of noninterference in each other's internal affairs hinders its effectiveness.

"In our own maybe fumbling way... we have at least the ability to bring all the 10 countries together every once in a while," Ong said in Asean's defense. "We speak frankly and express our fears about certain things." Kusnanto Anggoro, of the University of Indonesia's Department of International Studies, said Asean is relevant for Indonesia but he was "somewhat disappointed" at the pace of institution-building within Asean.

That could change if Asean adopts the draft of a proposed legally binding charter, which would be a radical departure from Asean's nonintervention principle.

The draft is to be presented at the Cebu summit.

"To be effective they need this charter," Samydorai said.

Ong said the charter would be a signal that "Hey, these guys are quite serious," and could mean an end to questions about Asean's relevance.

Philippine authorities have ramped up security for this week's summit, saying a terror attack could not be ruled out although there was no specific threat.

"As far as we know there is no specific threat against the summit itself, but we have not ruled anything out," Gen. Silverio Alarsio, who is leading the massive security operation for the summit, told AFP.

He said some 4,000 military personnel and 6,000 police were now in place in Cebu.

From Jan. 10 until Jan. 16, he said, a 32-kilometer no-fly zone will be enforced around the Mactan airport and the main summit venues of Cebu City, nearby Mandaue City and the luxury Shangri-La resort where the 10 Asean leaders will be billeted.

"The Philippine Navy will patrol the waters around Cebu while the Air Force will monitor all air movements," Alarsio added. *With AFP reports*

'Third force' shaping up for May polls

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE FORMATION OF A "THIRD force" composed of opposition leaders and erstwhile supporters, or nominal allies in the Senate, of President Macapagal-Arroyo is now in the works.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, a stalwart of the Liberal Party (LP) allied with the faction of Sen. Franklin Drilon, and Sonia Roco, the widow of the late presidential candidate Raul Roco, both told the INQUIRER yesterday that Ms Arroyo's critics were now negotiating for a common slate in the May 14 polls.

The LP-Drilon wing, the Nacionalista Party (NP) of Manuel Villar, Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko and the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) have been talking the past months, according to Pangilinan and Roco's widow.

Ms Roco confirmed that she had been approached by a top Palace emissary to join the administration slate, but added: "How can I? Raul's last public statement was 'Gloria resign, call snap.'" She will meet with Senators Villar and Mar Roxas, an LP stalwart, this week to finalize the slate.

But former Sen. Loren Legarda and House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano were both lukewarm to the proposal, saying a fractious opposition could prove favorable to the administration.

Cayetano said that however "un-winnable" the Malacañang-handpicked senatorial candidates may be, they would have an edge when pitted against a divided opposition.

"We should have one ticket, one face, one voice," said Legarda.

Pangilinan, LP's party chair, however explained that the objective of having a third force," is to establish the broadest coalition committed to ensuring that the Senate as an institution remains independent and vigilant."

"There are no final plans yet," he said, but added "there are no serious objections from the incumbent senators so far. Some have even expressed support for the concept." *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

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Senators seek extra ₱10B to help Bicol storm victims

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. RALPH RECTO YESTERDAY sought the inclusion of P10 billion for the rehabilitation of the typhoon-battered Bicol region in the P1.126-trillion 2007 proposed national budget.

His colleague, Sen. Joker Arroyo, said the Senate and House of Representatives were keen on passing a supplemental budget for this purpose.

"If we're serious in helping the Bicol region, we should include this in the 2007 budget. There's little time to pass a supplemental budget for the rehabilitation of the region," Recto, chair of the committee on ways and means, said in a phone interview.

"Recovery can only begin if the budget is reconciled. No other people suffer more from its delay than the Bicolanos," he added in a statement.

The rehabilitation of Bicol, he said, should be a "strong argument" for the bicameral conference committee to break the impasse on the national budget and pass it before Congress adjourns on Feb. 9 for the May 14 elections.

Bicameral talks on the budget were suspended in December after the Senate and House panels failed to agree on whether to retain the P4.7-billion fund for the Department of Education's school feeding program, or realign it to cut down on the shortages in classrooms and teachers.

The government has been operating on the rolled-over P907.56-billion 2005 budget since Jan. 1.

Recto, however, conceded that if Congress failed to hammer out a new budget, the executive and the legislative branches could work on a "supplemental budget" to rehabilitate Bicol, and other areas hardest hit by typhoons, including Supertyphoon "Reming" in December.

"The vacuum should be filled by the supplemental budget. But I hope it won't come to that point," he said. "I hope the House and the Senate can hammer out a new budget. Three natural calamities hit Bicol last year. The fourth one will be man-made and that would be the failure of Congress to pass a new budget."

Disaster officials had pegged at P50 billion the amount of damage to agriculture, infrastructure and private property wreaked by the typhoons, according to the senator.

Arroyo, for his part, said that both chambers would pass a P10-billion supplemental budget after it resumes sessions on Jan. 22 just as quickly as it approved the P2.5-billion supplemental budget to rehabilitate areas affected by the massive oil spill off Guimaras island.

The senator said that Malacañang had readied the P10-billion budget for approval last month, but was overtaken by the adjournment of Congress for the holidays on Dec. 21.

Port of Manila exceeds collection target by ₱5.2B

THE PORT OF MANILA GENERATED total revenues of P73.17 billion last year, exceeding its collection target by P5.19 billion, District Collector Horacio P. Suansing reported yesterday.

Cash collections accounted for 90 percent of the port's revenue take from duties and taxes on imports at the South Harbor and subports. Deferred payments (seven percent) and revenue paid with tax credits (three percent) comprised the rest of the Port of Manila's collections.

In a press statement, Suansing said last year's cash collection was 38 percent higher, or P18.27 billion more than that of 2005 despite the continuing tariff reduction program, the higher ratio of nondutiable imports, more tax credit applications, the increase in deferred payments by government agencies and the lower foreign exchange rate.

The Port of Manila contributes 36 percent to the total revenue collected by the entire Bureau of Customs. The remaining 64 percent of the bureau's take comes from 13 collection districts nationwide.

OFW suspect in ward's death

KUWAIT CITY—A DOMESTIC worker from the Philippines was suspected Saturday of killing her Kuwaiti employer's 7-year-old son by slitting his throat, a police source said.

The woman allegedly jumped from the second story of her employer's home, but not before also slitting the throat of the boy's 11-year-old brother and stabbing his 17-year-old sister, the source said.

The domestic worker and the two older children who survived the attack were rushed to a hospital, where they were all reported to be in serious condition.

The motive was not immediately known, but the source said the Filipino woman—who had been in Kuwait for only six months—had quarreled with her employers.

Her identity and hometown were not immediately known.

More than 70,000 Filipinos live and work in oil-rich Kuwait, many of them as domestic helpers. AFP

Valera snubs police invite in slay case

THE POLICE WILL NOT BE GETTING any answers from Abra Gov. Vicente Valera on the Bersamin slay case anytime soon.

On Friday, Valera formally turned down an invitation from the task force formed to investigate Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin's murder at Mt. Carmel Church to appear before it.

Quezon City Police District Investigation and Detective Management director Supt. Oscar Palisoc said on Saturday that Valera refused an invitation from QCPD Criminal Investigation Unit head Supt. Franklin Mabanag.

"It is with deep regret that I cannot yet honor your invitation with my presence..," said Valera.

Valera said he had also been advised by his lawyers "to give any comments or statements only in their presence and at the appropriate time and forum."

Palisoc, meanwhile, said the police were "slowly closing in" on the other suspects in the Bersamin murder.

Palisoc said that while former soldier Rufino Panday, a suspect, had provided police with enough leads to solve the case, the arrest of the other suspects could break the case wide open.

On Dec. 29, Valera's Chevrolet Suburban SUV was flagged down by police on Commonwealth Avenue for having no license plates and using a siren.

Seven firearms were found in the vehicle and Valera was charged with illegal possession of firearms. *Alcuin Papa*

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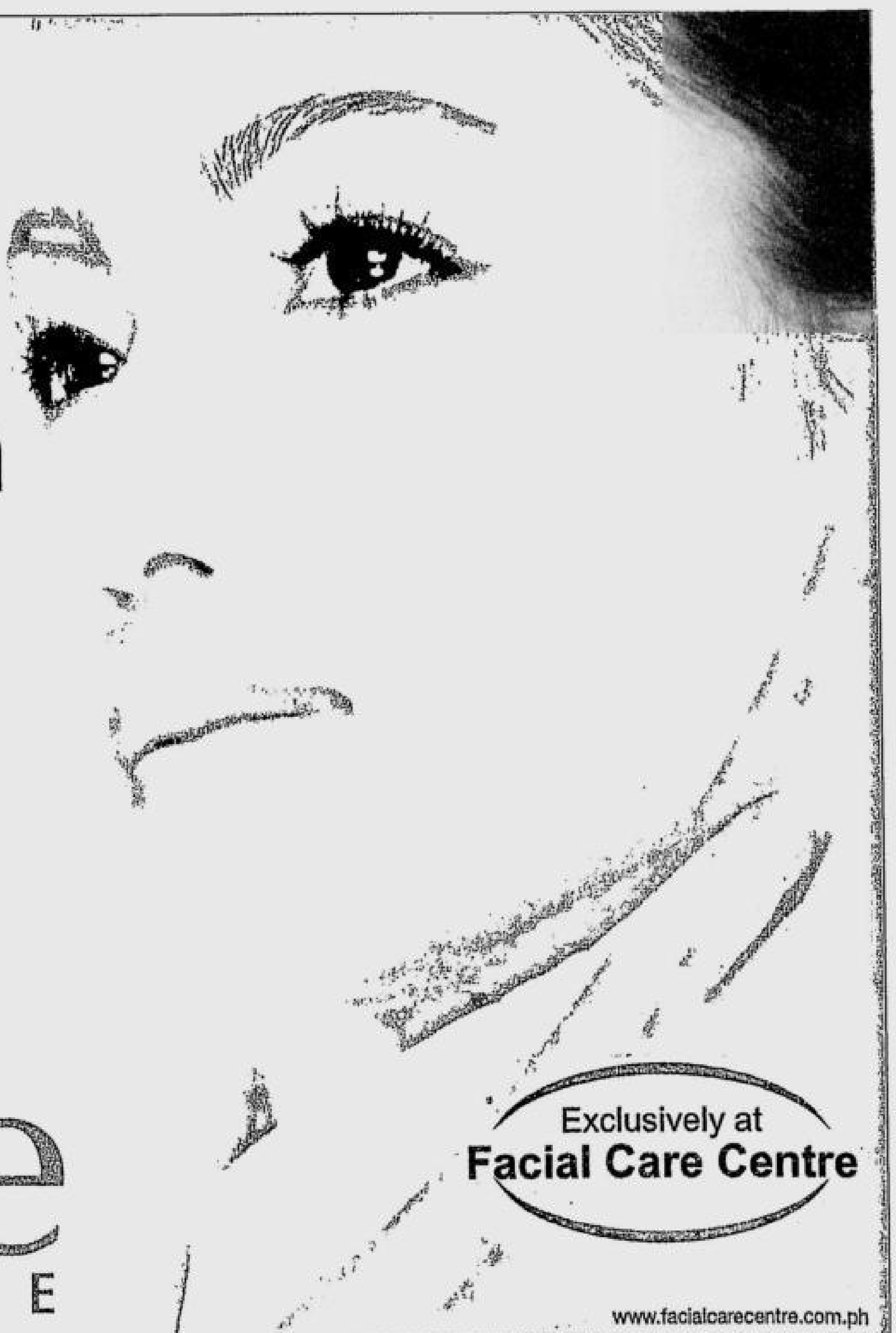

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Long lines at Naia irk foreign airlines

From page A1

gers," government authorities should ensure that services and the facilities could respond efficiently.

"There is congestion at the airport. But this happens every year. Our point is, there should be better services and facilities should be improved," Ed Monreal, AOC vice chair, told the INQUIRER in an interview.

Monreal said that Cathay Pacific alone counted a total delay of 131 minutes at the immigration counter and 18 minutes because of the baggage belt failure on Jan. 1-4.

Few officers at counters

AOC chair Leoncio Nakpil said that Cathay Pacific had experienced an hourlong flight delay while other flights had a minimum of 10-minute flight delays due to the congestion at immigration counters.

Nakpil said that airlines had noticed only a few immigration officers manning the counters at the immigration departure despite the increased volume of passengers.

"As we speak, the lines are very long at the counters and I counted only seven immigration officers," Nakpil told the INQUIRER in a phone interview shortly after noon on Saturday.

Ferdinand Sampol, head supervisor of the Naia Bureau of Immigration, admitted that the queues were longer now at the departure immigration of Naia 1. He also said more officers were being assigned to Naia from this week.

"We anticipated that there will be an increased number of passengers but we did not expect that it would be this much," he said, pointing out fully booked flights seemed to be departing all at the same time.

As for the defective conveyor belt at Naia's west baggage buildup area, the AOC complained that it had broken down three times after a near monthlong repair during the holiday season.

"It is definitely affecting our operations," Monreal said.

12,000 passengers daily

AOC officials pointed out that the manual loading resorted to during the emergency defeated the purpose of having a sanitized luggage because a third party—the person loading the bags in the buildup area—has already touched the bags.

Octavio Lina, Miaa operations chief, admitted the delay in the completion of the baggage conveyor belt repair which was outsourced to a contractor. "It's still on initial operation after the rehabilitation. It's still adjusting," Lina said in a phone interview.

In a statement, the Miaa has advised departing passengers to check in early for their flights because of the passenger congestion at the airport terminals. The Miaa anticipates 12,000 passengers to depart from the Naia daily this month.

'Distressed' plane denied to land due to GMA flight

By Nikko Dizon

WHICH SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIORITY ON the runway: A Learjet taking off with President Macapagal-Arroyo on board or an incoming long haul Airbus 340 ferrying 231 passengers that is running low on fuel?

This was the question posed by an official of the Airline Operators Council (AOC) after a Gulf Air flight from Bahrain was reportedly stopped from landing at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) because Ms Arroyo was using the runway for her flight to Davao City on Wednesday to stand as a wedding sponsor.

The AOC also is complaining about long queues at the departure immigration counters and a defective baggage facility that have delayed outbound flights. *(See story on Page A1.)*

"Even if the President's plane was already taxiing but the pilot (of the other aircraft) declared he was low on fuel, the latter should have been allowed to land," Leoncio Nakpil, AOC chair and Gulf Air security chief in Manila, told reporters.

Distress call

It is, by all intents and purposes, already considered a "distress call" for an emergency landing, Nakpil said.

Nakpil said the Air Transportation Office (ATO) should explain why flight GF 154 was not allowed to land. It was also told that it was sixth in line for landing. (The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach ATO chief Nilo Jatico for comment yesterday.)

The pilot then decided to divert Flight GF 154 to the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) at Clark Field in Pampanga. At this point, Nakpil said, GF 154 technically became a "missing plane" for 15 minutes, the time wherein the aircraft was repositioning itself for landing at the DMIA.

"I thought it was only delayed because of the presidential movement, until (retired) Gen. (Angel) Atutubo (airport security chief) called me up asking where GF 154 was," Nakpil said.

Local office not notified

Soon after, Nakpil said, Gulf Air Manila received an "operations flash" from its headquarters in Bahrain that GF 154 had "diverted to the DMIA due to a presidential movement." (An aircraft is equipped with a device that sends a signal to its headquarters on its location, Nakpil explained.)

"There was confusion. Nobody told us that the aircraft had diverted to Clark. Not even the Miaa (Manila International Airport Authority) knew the flight was diverted," Nakpil said.

"It was tantamount to endangering the lives of all the passengers and crew. What if the plane lost fuel and crashed?" an irate Nakpil said.

"The pilot said the air traffic controller was actually very accommodating. But somewhere, somehow, his request was suddenly denied supposedly because the runway was closed for President Arroyo's flight," Nakpil said.

Ms Arroyo left that afternoon on board the Learjet for Davao to stand as one of the principal sponsors in the wedding of the son of House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles.

Landing at the DMIA for refueling and going back to the Naia entailed Gulf Air having to file a new flight plan and also pay for landing fees, among other things to be done.

For protocol and security reasons, the Naia runways are closed when there is a presidential movement.

Nakpil stressed that international aviation rules dictate that regardless of whether there is a VIP movement, emergency situations are also given priority.

"An aircraft running low on fuel is considered an emergency situation," he said.

The airport runway is under the ATO's jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, a Miaa official said the airport authority is also investigating the incident.

Nakpil said that ideally, the presidential flight should have given way to the distressed aircraft.

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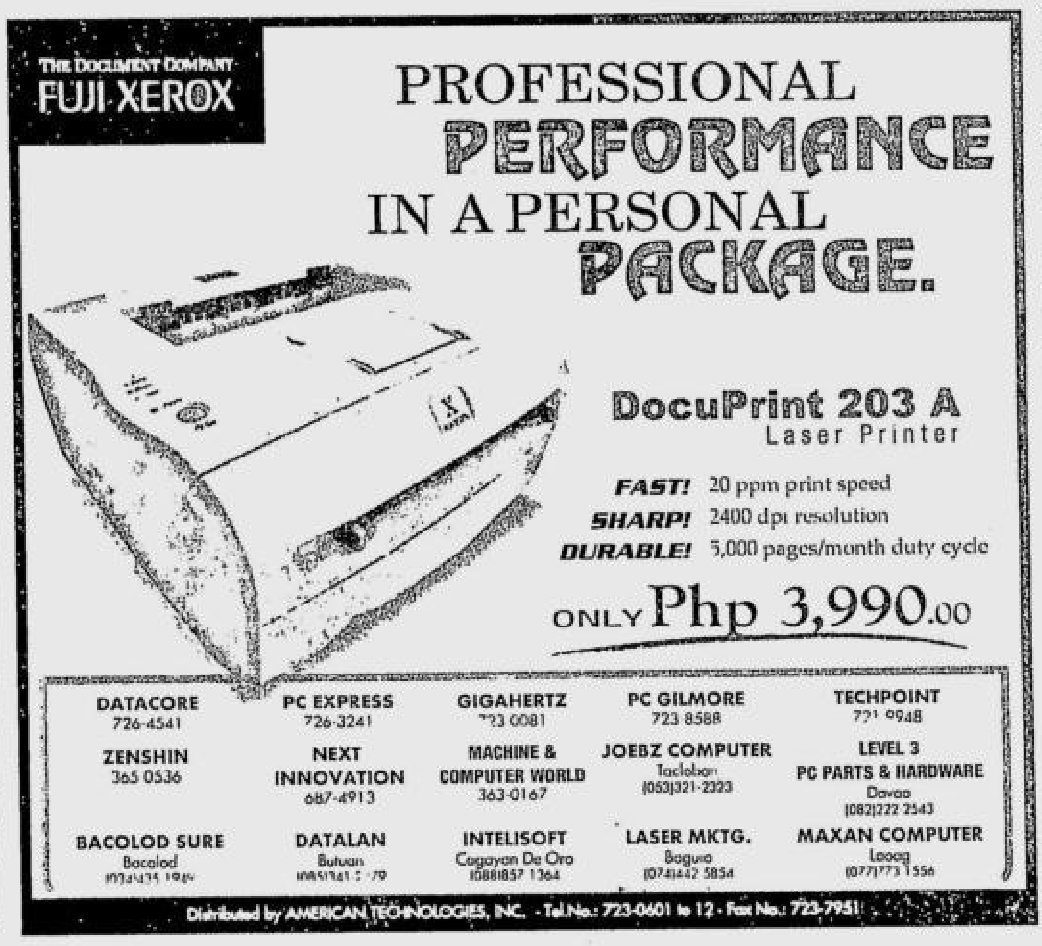
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From page A1

Following her election as the first woman Speaker of the House, Pelosi said: "The election of 2006 was a call to change—not merely to change control of Congress, but for a new direction of our country. Nowhere were the American people more clear about the direction than in Iraq. The American people rejected an open-ended obligation to a war without end."

Pelosi leads the House of Representatives that the Democrats have taken control of for the first time since 1994, winning last November a clear majority, with 233 seats to 202 Republicans.

The Democrats regained control of both houses of Congress, after wandering in the political wilderness for 12 years. They hold the slimmest of majorities, in the Senate, 51 to 49, but this did not stop them from putting Bush on notice that their commanding majority in the House allows them to set the agenda during the last two years of the Bush presidency.

Pivotal position

Their capture of Congress puts Pelosi in the pivotal position of setting the agenda. She is second in line for the presidency, after Vice President Richard Cheney.

Pelosi has shunted aside the unelected Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, reputed to be the most powerful woman in the United States prior to the Democratic sweep in the midterm elections.

After receiving the Speaker's gavel with a standing ovation, Pelosi said, "I accept this gavel in the spirit of partnership not partisanship, and look forward to working with you on behalf of the American people."

Although Bush acknowledged his fellow Republicans had received a "thumping" in the elections, and had pledged to find common ground with the Democrats, saying that "it's time to set aside politics and focus on the future."

Despite the talk about a desire for "bipartisanship" and pledge to "rise above partisan differences," this spirit of conciliation had rapidly evaporated by the New Year.

While Pelosi is regarded as a "consensus builder," Bush has been seen as a divisive president, who ignored the Democratic minority when the Republicans were dominant during his first term and the first half of his second.

Far from chastened

Bush now has to negotiate with the Democratic majority under circumstances he is not used too, and he appears far from chastened by the Republican defeat. The war in Iraq was the main issue that turned the American voters away from the Republicans, and looms as the main issue that divides Bush and the Democrats.

Rather than heeding the Democrats' call for a timetable to withdraw, Bush's plan to increase US troops in Iraq, not only revived the bitterness and the divisiveness of the debate over Iraq, but also provoked an early collision with the Democratic majority.

Thomas Mann, congressional scholar for the Washington think tank Brookings, said Bush had clearly not accepted his loss of political power.

"His apparent decision to surge US forces in Iraq will be wildly unpopular in the country and in Congress," Mann said. "The ensuing battles are likely to diminish any chance of cooperation on domestic issues."

Most divisive President

Washington-based journalists see no bipartisanship developing over Iraq. As one commentator observed, "Bush is perhaps the most divisive president in recent American history, and Iraq is the key issue confronting the US. The divisions between Bush and congressional Democrats remain bitter and irreconcilable."

The 2006 US midterm elections pointed to the opportunities for change in a political system like ours, which is modeled on the US presidential system.

The midterm elections scheduled for May in the Philippines offer opportunities for policy change and a fresh mandate for the Arroyo administration.

Ms Arroyo's survival

President Macapagal-Arroyo's tenure is not directly at issue in May, but two critical ones are involved—the survival of her regime until 2010 when she shall have served her full term, and control of the House.

No great policy issue—foreign and economic policy or even constitutional change—is involved. It is unlike the 2006 US midterm elections, which were decided by the overriding Iraq issue and by the corruption scandals in the Republican-dominated Congress.

No issue divides the Philippine political parties in May. So, we should not think in terms of bipartisanship but in terms of multipartisanship of parties aligned along proadministration and opposition coalitions.

We, therefore, should not expect important policy shifts from the May elections.

Vindictiveness

Opposition forces are planning a campaign of political vindictiveness that seeks to control the House of Representatives, the real battleground of the elections.

The aim is to seize control of the House to set the stage for the impeachment of Ms Arroyo, who had crushed two impeachment complaints during the past two years with the help of her allies who form the majority in the House.

In this respect, the May elections are a narrowly defined political exercise aimed at nothing more than cutting short Ms Arroyo's term.

It will not even decide the immediate prospects of constitutional change, a key policy initiative of the administration.

A change of control of Congress will not have any bearing on economic policies involving growth and financial reforms that have curbed the fiscal deficit over the past two years.

Some instant heroes find fame unbearable

From page A1

Then came the national TV interviews, the fan mail from strangers, the offers to do commercials, the free trip to Disney World.

Then came the nightmares resulting from his near-death plunge. He returned to work after the Disney World trip only to get harassed about his absence, and quit. He lost his health insurance, the money ran out, and he started drinking heavily.

"My life unraveled. The publicity changed my life. I didn't want it to," said Santos, who still occasionally hears the words "the bridge jumper" from strangers on the street. "I had my 15 minutes of fame and I was yesterday's news. I didn't care, but it took me four or five years to get my life back."

New hero crowned

Santos recalled his experience on Friday as New York crowned a new hero—the man who dove in front of a Manhattan subway train Tuesday to save a teenager, one of the city's most amazing acts of bravery in recent memory.

Since then, fame has accompanied subway rescuer Wesley Autrey everywhere he has gone.

The 50-year-old construction worker won accolades such as "the hero of Harlem" and "Subway Superman," appeared on David Letterman and accepted money and other gifts—including a trip to Disney World. Mayor Michael Bloomberg bestowed him with the city's highest civic award, the Bronze Medallion; past recipients included Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

As Santos can attest, though, there are dangers in becoming an overnight hero in a media-saturated society.

"They go one of two ways: They either recognize that their act was a moment in time they can enjoy temporarily, and the rest of their life is a consequence of everyday routine—or they get stuck in their deed or action, feel entitled and lose perspective. That's the danger," said Alan Hilfer, chief psychologist at Brooklyn's Maimonides Medical Center.

'Been there, done that'

Joseph Dunwald was only 17 when he did about the same thing as Autrey. He leaped off a Manhattan subway platform to rescue a man who had fainted and fallen onto the tracks.

"Been there, done that," Dunwald, now 81, said while watching Autrey on TV.

Dunwald, a retired New York firefighter who lives in Lake Mary, Florida, said the moment and the public attention "changed my persona. It was a new level of responsibility, a prep course for what was about to happen—ducking German submarines in World War II."

It was, he said, "a great preparation for life"—a happy, healthy life far from the spotlight.

For his efforts, Dunwald also got a gold Bulova watch as a reward, and "baby, did I ever get lots of dates."

Another overnight hero who succeeded amid the glow was Felix Vazquez, a New York City housing employee who caught an infant thrown from a burning apartment in December 2005.

"I just went back to work like nothing happened. But people kept calling," said Vazquez, who also received the Bronze Medallion from the mayor.

At the time, he was in the middle of a divorce and under stress, "and I became a better person. People started noticing me, and saying hi—appreciating me," said the 40-year-old father of three, speaking from the stairwell of a Bronx housing development where he supervises janitors.

Autrey has seemed to take his instant celebrity in stride, calling his act the only decent thing to have done.

"How are you going to walk by someone who's ill and just look—'Oh, well, I'm busy, I've got to go to work'?" Autrey said.

Personality change

Rewind a decade.

"When you see somebody in the water like that, hopeless, and you're afraid they're going to drown, you're going to do something to help them so that's what I did," Santos, then a volunteer firefighter, said in the days after his plunge from the Tappan Zee Bridge.

Santos' troubles piled up quickly, however. On top of losing his job, a TV network threatened to sue him, accusing him of not sticking to his "exclusive" interview contract. Everyone wanted him on the air.

"My personality changed," he recalled.

Santos, now 31, still lives near the bridge, north of New York City. He works as a plumber and is engaged.

One afternoon when a job fell through, he visited the old firefighter friends he credits with helping him get back to normal. "They're the guys who were there for me when I went from being a superstar to being nobody, and they're still there for me now," he said, speaking by phone from the firehouse.

To this day, he is "petrified of heights." Still, he climbs the 33.5-meter ladder of a fire truck, "even if I'm nervous." The woman he rescued still occasionally calls him from Connecticut, where she lives.

He had some advice for Autrey: "It's going to take time, but try not to change, try to continue doing the same thing as before." *AP*

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AFP modernization drive sputters

From page A1

do have a solitary Simba tank, as well as a few handheld radios. But they are basically going to war with only re-barreled or repaired M-16 rifles for firepower, a few night-vision goggles for increased visibility, and for communications, mostly personal cell phones loaded with prepaid unlimited text.

Apart from that, "we rely on God's will, our training and common sense to protect us," says one Army commander. Yet the soldiers continue to believe "we will win this war" against the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army, which are waging Asia's longest-running insurgency.

By now, the Armed Forces of the Philippines should have been a modern, professional force capable of dealing with both external threats and internal security concerns. In December [illegible], Congress approved Joint Resolution No. 28 in which both the Senate and House of Representatives gave their blessings to Republic Act No. 7898, known as the AFP Modernization Act.

The law envisioned a professionalized armed force, as well as "the acquisition and upgrading of appropriate technology and equipment" to bring the AFP into the 21st century.

Magnet for graft

Ten years and more than P11 billion later, there has been very little actual acquisition of new equipment for the AFP. Government auditors and budget officials have found that there are weak controls over funds of the AFP, whether for modernization or not, such as those intended for peacekeeping forces or "Balikatan" exercises.

Procurement officials likewise say the AFP has shown a disregard for procurement processes provided by law. As a result, the multibillion-peso AFP budget, its modernization fund included, has been a magnet for graft and corruption.

What has instead happened is that the modernization program, whose core component is capability, materiel and technology development, has turned into one of repair and refurbishment, with a huge chunk of the funds being spent on regular items like office supplies.

"I cannot consider that AFP modernization," said Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a retired AFP chief of staff who coauthored the AFP modernization law in the Senate.

In its present state, Biazon said, the AFP "is not capable of addressing the insurgency threats" from the CPP-NPA and the Moro secessionists.

Still in Square One

The government practically acknowledges that the AFP Modernization Program (AFPMP) is still where it was 10 years ago—in square one. Last year, the Department of National Defense rolled off an 18-year plan called the Capability Upgrade Program (CUP), which takes over the equipment procurement functions of the AFPMP.

Under the CUP, the AFP will get P5 billion yearly, apart from its regular budget appropriations, for the next six years.

Defense and AFP officials acknowledge that the early years of the AFPMP were difficult ones. The program was intended to span 15 years, with a budget of P50 billion for the first five years—or P10 billion a year—over and above what the AFP would receive from the General Appropriations. The funds for modernization are supposed to come from the AFP's share of proceeds from the lease and sale of former military camps and the income from the government arsenal.

But during President Fidel V. Ramos' term, no funds were made available for the AFP modernization. It was only in 2000, under the administration of President Joseph Estrada, that the modernization started receiving income from the sale of Fort Bonifacio. And only in 2002 did Congress allocate funds for the AFPMP.

As of 2005, the total amount of money that had gone into the program stood at P11.8 billion, the bulk of which came from the lease of military property, disposal of AFP assets and congressional allocations.

At the time the AFP Modernization Law was passed, the AFP's principal function was "to uphold the sovereignty and preserve the patrimony of the Republic of the Philippines." The law had a different enemy in mind—external forces threatening Philippine territory, including the disputed Spratly Islands. The task of fighting the communist insurgency and other internal threats was the responsibility of the then newly created Philippine National Police.

But the internal threats—the communist insurgency, the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front—proved too much for the PNP to handle. This forced a revision of the AFP's priorities from external defense to internal security.

Unimplemented

This refocusing of priorities also resulted in several changes in the AFPMP priority projects, which were revised at least three times—in 2000, 2002 and 2004 with the drafting of the Integrated Priority Projects List. The program underwent another reinvention with the CUP.

In its annual report for 2005, the Commission on Audit found that out of 48 priority projects worth P10 billion scheduled for implementation by Dec. 31, 2005, only 24 percent had been completed. Eight projects worth P2 billion were ongoing while 26 projects totaling nearly P6 billion remained unimplemented at the time.

The COA said the AFP's "failure to maximize the AFP modernization fund resulted in the delayed implementation" of the program ... and will greatly affect its primary objective to modernize the AFP to a level where it can effectively and fully perform its mandate."

As of the end of 2006, the program still had five ongoing projects and 20 more, worth P5 billion, still in the procurement process.

In its early years, AFP and defense officials cited a lack of funds and the cumbersome procurement process as among the reasons for the AFP's failure to acquire equipment.

Even the Feliciano Commission, which investigated the complaints of disgruntled young officers who took part in what is now known as the Oakwood mutiny of July 2003, found out as much. "Procurement under the AFP Modernization Program is even lengthier and more complex than the ordinary AFP procurement process," it said.

23 steps

The commission noted that it took the AFP 23 steps to procure weapons and other defense equipment—from the formulation and issuance of the Circular of Requirements or Bid Evaluation Plan (COR-BEP), to the bidding and award, and to project implementation.

The Feliciano Commission said a substantial bottleneck existed at the initial stages of this process. The COR-BEP is formulated at the headquarters of the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy or the Philippine Air Force, and then has to go to the AFP General Headquarters (AFP-GHQ) for another round of evaluation before approval is sought from the Department of National Defense. In certain cases, approval of the Office of the President must be obtained.

As a result, "not a single weapon or equipment had been acquired and upgraded" under the AFPMP from 2000 to 2002, a DND report said.

Conversion

Despite the failure to acquire new equipment during that period, the AFP was already spending the AFP Modernization Fund on items, like office supplies and catering, which have little to do with the program.

A special team from the COA found that from 2001 to 2004, certain transactions under the Modernization Fund became subject to conversion. Conversion is a long standing practice in the AFP and an issue that Oakwood mutineers raised.

The Feliciano Commission defined conversion as "the transforming of allocated funds into cash, most commonly in collusion with suppliers and some of the officers involved in the procurement process in an AFP unit."

Converted cash, which can eat up at least 30 percent of the budget, usually ends up in the bank account of the commanding officer of the unit for whom the funds are intended, according to the commission.

The special COA team, headed by auditor Heidi Mendoza, was created in October 2004, shortly after Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, a former AFP comptroller, was charged with siphoning off AFP funds into his personal bank account. The team worked out of the Office of the Ombudsman.

Mendoza and her team presented their findings to top COA officials as well as to the Ombudsman for the military. But the team was not allowed to further investigate the AFP, and its findings were not acted upon. Mendoza, who later quit the COA out of disgust, declined to be interviewed for this report.

'Office supplies'

Among the team's findings was that as of 2003, for instance, out of the P160 million transferred to the Philippine Army from the modernization fund, 32.5 percent or P52 million went to office supplies.

In the case of the Philippine Air Force, about P24 million or 62 percent of its P39-million budget from the fund also went to office supplies.

At the AFP General Headquarters, P48.4 million went to office supplies between 2001 and 2004. "Purchases of supplies are made not to meet basic office requirements but more of a scheme to convert cash," said the COA team.

It found that in 2001, as much as P17 million was spent on various office supplies, mostly printer ink, and all receipts were dated Dec. 28, 2001. It also found rigged bidding in the procurement of these supplies. The contracts also went to the companies whose owners were related to each other.

"Various office supplies were purchased at the last working day of December, which rendered the transactions doubtful as each entire transaction is completed within a day. All documents attached are dated Dec. 28. It is highly questionable that while the procurement directive was dated 28 Dec. 2001, the items directed to be procured are also delivered and inspected on the same date," said the COA team.

Huge catering bill

The auditors also found that in the case of the AFP-GHQ P17.6 million was spent on food and catering from 2001 to 2003. The COA team found the figure unusually large and documents pertaining to it questionable. There were even separate invoices that showed catering services contracted for activities happening at the same time at the same venue.

More than half the amount, or P9 million, went to only one "caterer"—Alvenru Enterprises, which is also a supplier of printer ribbons, computer forms and other office items.

On the food and catering expenses, the COA team also found that:

- The agenda of the meetings for which the caterers were hired showed the same names of participants and notices of conferences, which the COA auditors said were "recycled."
- As a result of recycling, then Brig. Gen. Generoso Senga came out looking like he had presided over 22 out of 32 meetings of the bids and awards committee to discuss infantry weapons and mobility.
- The list of participants did not tally with the invoice. The participants listed in some meetings numbered only 20, but the invoices showed that the food served was for 100 people.

Unreported interest earnings

The audit findings also point to weak controls in the handling of the modernization fund. In particular, the auditors took issue with the AFP's failure to report P11.7 million in interest earnings on its P271.1-million share from proceeds of the lease agreement with Ayala Land Inc. for the modernization program.

The AFP collected the sum on Feb. 12, 2002, but held on to it for more than a year before remitting it to the Bureau of Treasury, according to the COA team. All the while, it had invested the money in a special savings deposit with Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) that yielded P11.7 million.

"Yet (the deposit) was unrecorded and the interests accrued out of the special savings, undeclared and unrecorded (in the AFP's books)," the COA team said.

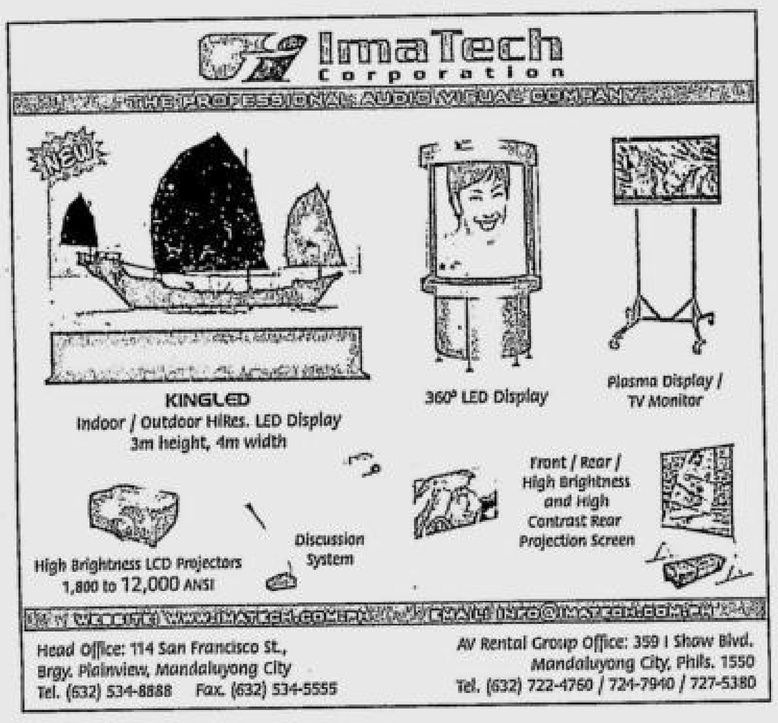
The regular audits the COA did on the AFP in 2004 and 2005 came across the same problem. In the 2005 audit, the unrecorded interest income on the AFPMP's 103 current and saving deposits with LandBank and DBP reached nearly P79 million.

Uncollected

Unlike other units at the AFP-GHQ, the program accounts for a tiny fraction of the P310 million in cash advances that remained unliquidated as of Dec. 31, 2005. The advances totaled a minuscule P839,309, according to the COA report for 2005.

But also unlike the rest, the program was the only unit that ran into one major problem when asked by the COA to send demand or collection letters to the accountable officers to settle their accounts.

"Demand letters were not sent to the accountable officers due to the absence of records to locate their whereabouts," the COA report said. (*To be continued*)



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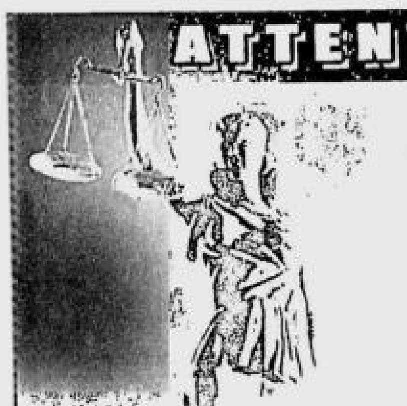

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☐ Jan. 20 p.m.	2/Trial and Pre-Trial Skills 3/Updates in Substantive and Procedural Laws and Jurisprudence: SRC & Corporate Governance	Justice Edilberto G. Sandoval SEC Director Justina F. Callangan
☐ Jan. 27 a.m.	2/Legal Ethics 2/Alternative Dispute Resolution	Justice Jose L. Sabio, Jr. ACA Nimfa C. Vilches
☐ Jan. 27 p.m.	3/Updates in Constitutional Law 2/MCLE Prescribed Subjects: Forensic Evidence: DNA & its Analysis	Prof. H. Harry L. Roque, Jr. Dra. Racquel B. Del Rosario-Fortun
☐ Feb. 03 a.m.	2/Trial and Pre-Trial Skills 2/MCLE Prescribed Subjects: Recent Jurisprudence in Family Law Cases	DCA Zenaida N. Elepaño Prof. Melencio S. Sta. Maria
☐ Feb. 03 p.m.	2/Legal Ethics 3/Alternative Dispute Resolution	Justice Hilarion L. Aquino Dean Custodio O. Parlade
☐ Feb. 10 a.m.	2/Legal Writing and Oral Advocacy 2/Legal Ethics	Justice Magdangal M. De Leon Justice Hector L. Hofileña
☐ Feb 10 p.m.	2/MCLE Prescribed Subjects: Technology and the Law 3/Updates in Criminal Law	Atty. Ivan John E. Uy Justice Diosdado M. Peralta

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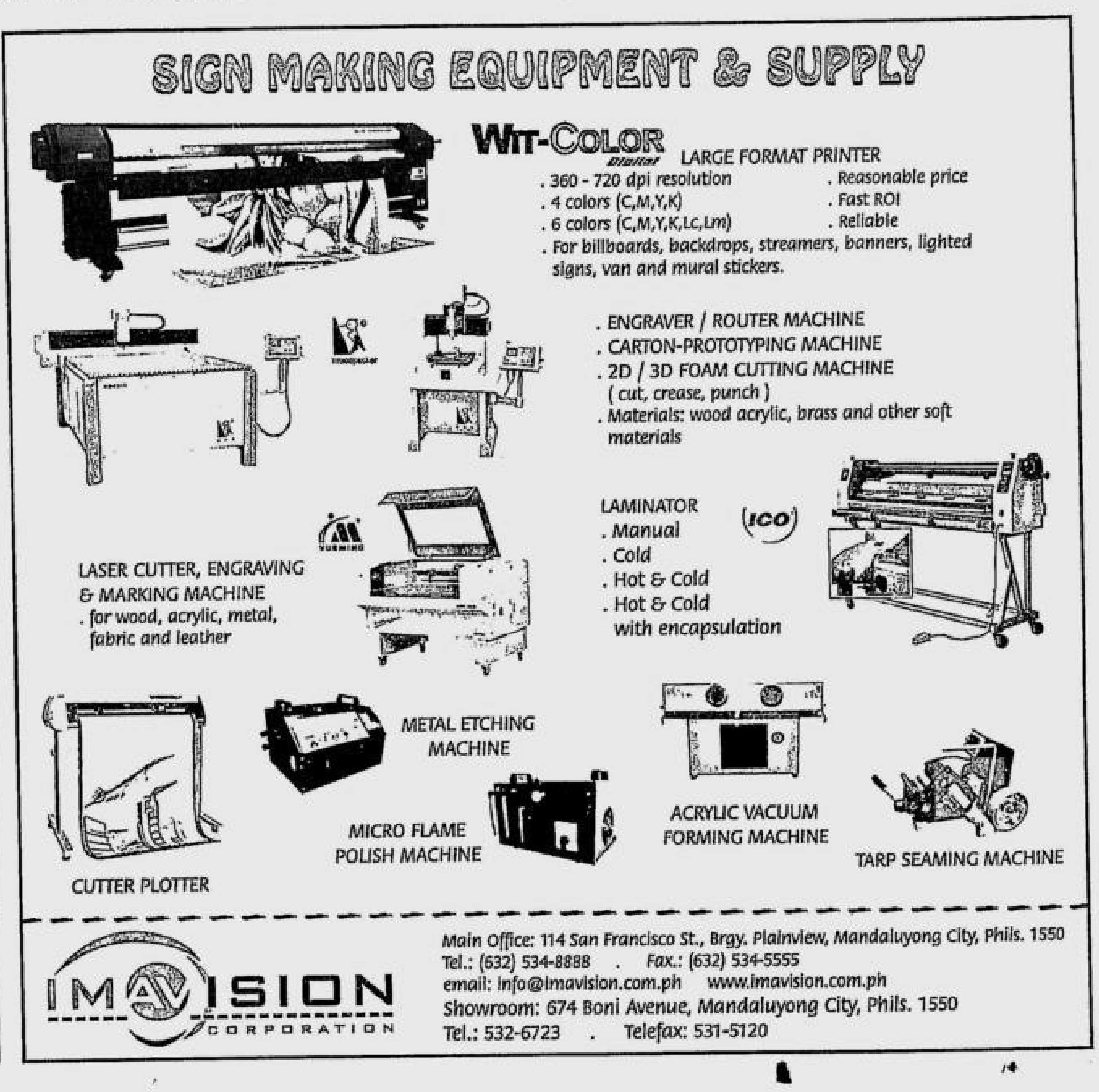

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Military says Reds won't be able to collect campaign fees

By Alcuin Papa

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES said it would thwart any efforts by the communist New People's Army (NPA) to collect "permit to campaign" fees from politicians during the May elections.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon said the military had already received reports that the NPA was planning to collect "permit to campaign" fees in the areas under its control from candidates.

"We hope to be able to control the collection of permit to campaign fees. We will discuss with the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies as I think it's an illegal activity," Esperon said.

The NPA collects the fees from politicians who want to campaign in areas where they hold sway.

Esperon urged candidates not to pay campaign fees to the NPA.

"We should not be paying fees to an armed group that is bent on extorting [money] from the people, from the candidates. (I am) calling on probable candidates not to pay permits to campaign fees to the NPA," said Esperon.

The AFP and the PNP have been also deputized by the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to enforce the gun ban during the election period.

According to Esperon, the military and police can also be called on in cases of the "presence of a strong armed threat" in any locality.

Meanwhile, an election official said that military personnel who recently registered as voters would only be allowed to vote for senators and party-list representatives and only inside their camps.

Polling precincts in military camps would also have poll watchers and would be placed under the supervision of boards of election inspectors (BEIs) constituted by the Comelec. *With a report from Joey A. Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas*

Photojournalist D. Baldovino; 69

FAMED PHOTOGRAPHER DICK BALDOVINO passed away on Saturday at his Quezon City home after a lingering illness. He was 69.

Richard Fletcher Baldovino was a key figure in the development of photography in the country—from guild to profession to graphic art.

He was among the first Filipino photojournalists to use state-of-the-art equipment and available light to portray unposed everyday subjects in the tradition of what French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson called "the decisive moment."

His career as a freelance photographer began in 1960, when the artist Malang commissioned him to take photographs for the Manila Chronicle magazine. He carved a reputation for his stunning portraits of the country's first National Artists.

In 1963, Baldovino joined The Asia Magazine, the Hong Kong-based regional supplement of leading English-language newspapers. He undertook photographic assignments in Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, India, Australia, Canada, Guam and Hawaii.

In the 1970s, Baldovino diversified into advertising, films, and art books.

His remains lie at St. Peter's Chapel on Quezon Boulevard corner Scout Chuatoco in Quezon City. Cremation is scheduled at the Eternal Memorial Garden on Jan. 10.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 8, 2007
1st Reading: Is 40:1-5, 9-11
2nd Reading: Tit 2:11-14; 3:4-7
Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

The people were wondering about John's identity, "Could he be the Messiah?" Then John answered them, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is coming will do much more: He will baptize you with Holy Spirit and fire. As for me, I am not worthy to untie his sandal."

Now, with all the people who came to be baptized, Jesus too was baptized. Then, while he was praying, the heavens opened: the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the bodily form of a dove and a voice from heaven was heard, "You are my Son, this day I have begotten you."

Commentary

Be comforted, my people! We are released from bondage, freed! Look, even the earth responds to this voice: valleys raised up, mountains brought low, the way smoothed out, and glory everywhere. Now we cry out, "Here is your God!" He is a shepherd, tender with the young, a leader who carries his own. God comes so close, and is so human among us.

By baptism, we are now made holy in God. We are saved by the mercy of God, that is the person of Jesus come into our world, and he seeks to purify us and make us holy as he is holy. The people wait in anticipation—do we? Do we live with the fire and Spirit of our baptisms? Jesus was praying; the Spirit came upon him and the Father declares, "You are my Son, this day I have begotten you." Today we too are begotten of God and the Father declares, "You are my daughter, my son."

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Spare the trees, poll bets urged

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LUCENA CITY—WITH THE ELECTION season in the air, a national environmentalist group has asked politicians not to post campaign materials and streamers on trees.

"For the sake of the environment, please spare the trees. The nails cause injury to the trees which could affect their growth," said lawyer Asis Perez, executive director of Tanggol Kalikasan, a public interest legal defense center.

Perez said nails and staple wire could inflict wounds on trees.

"They could die from these inflictions. Trees are like people," she said.

Posters and streamers of politicians bearing holiday greetings had mushroomed all over the Maharlika Highway in Luzon. Most of these had been nailed to coconut and other fruit trees.

Perez said candidates should strictly follow the election law.

The law prohibits the posting of campaign materials in public areas outside designated common poster areas. It also bans the posting of campaign materials on trees, bridges, public structures or buildings, electric posts, schools, churches and along main roads.

The law, however, is usually ignored by campaign workers who nail or bolt election paraphernalia to trees and other prohibited materials without fear of being sanctioned by the Commission on Elections.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources reported a sudden increase in the number of tree infections six months after the end of the election period in May 2004.

Tanggol Kalikasan had also asked candidates to use recycled paper for their campaign materials.

"Our forests are dying. The candidates should lead in the preservation of the remaining forested areas," said Glenn Forbes, Tanggol Kalikasan's program officer.

"For sure, environmental groups in the country will assess the track records of politicians, both national and local. We will campaign hard against those involved in forest destruction," Forbes said.

Under the Omnibus Election Code, the campaign period for candidates aspiring for national positions as well as for political parties, organizations and coalitions participating in the party-list system will run from Feb. 13 to May 12. The period for candidates vying for congressional, provincial and municipal seats will run from March 30 to May 12.

The Comelec said the current practice of candidates and incumbent officials putting up streamers with their names and greetings on them could not be considered electioneering because the period for the filing of certificates of candidacy had not yet started.

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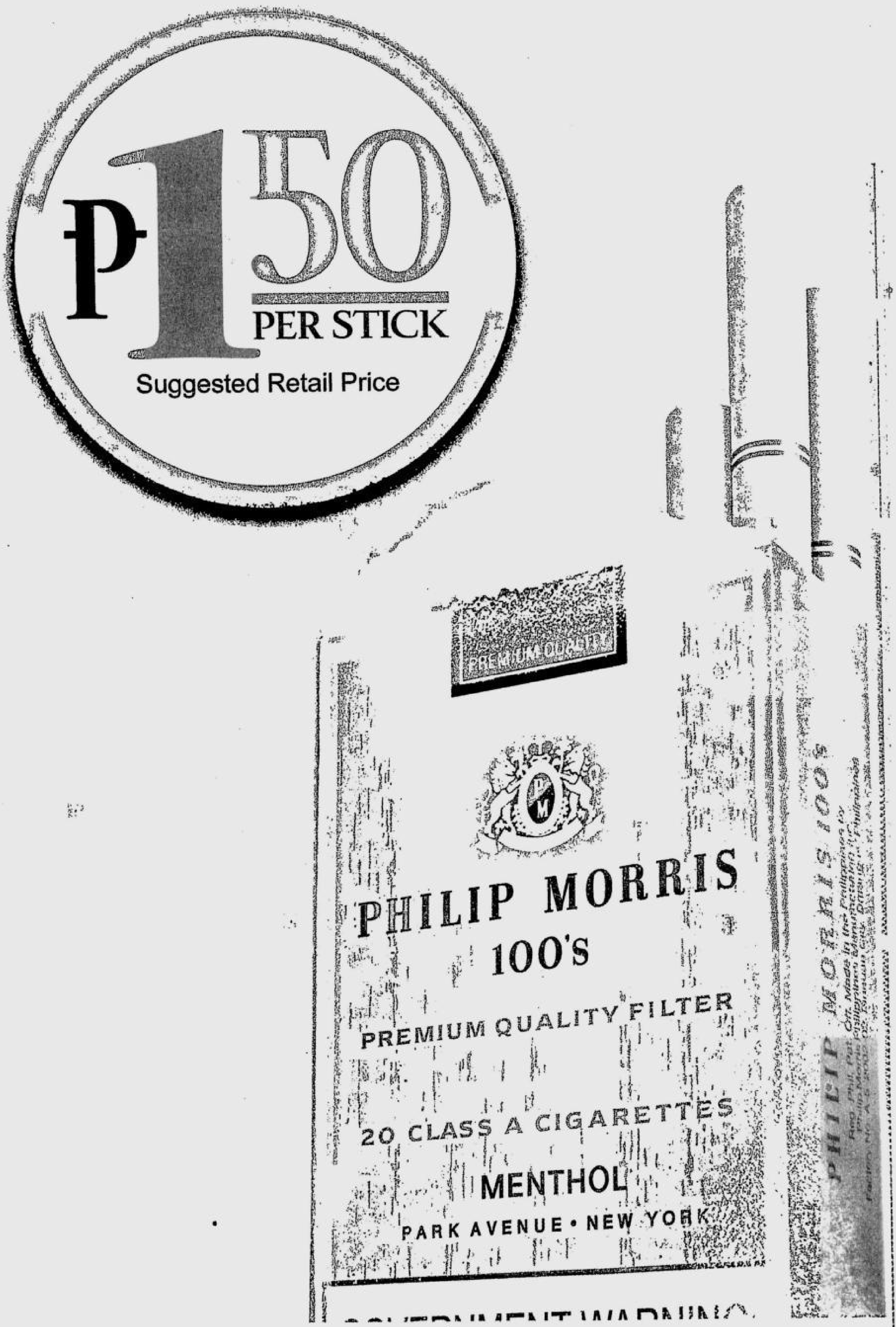

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2 senators praise VFA official for quitting

From page A1

cause his position ran counter to the administration's.

President annoyed

Paredes had charged that the executive branch "took the law into its hands" when it whisked Smith out of the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy on Dec. 29 at close to midnight before the appellate court could rule on his custody case.

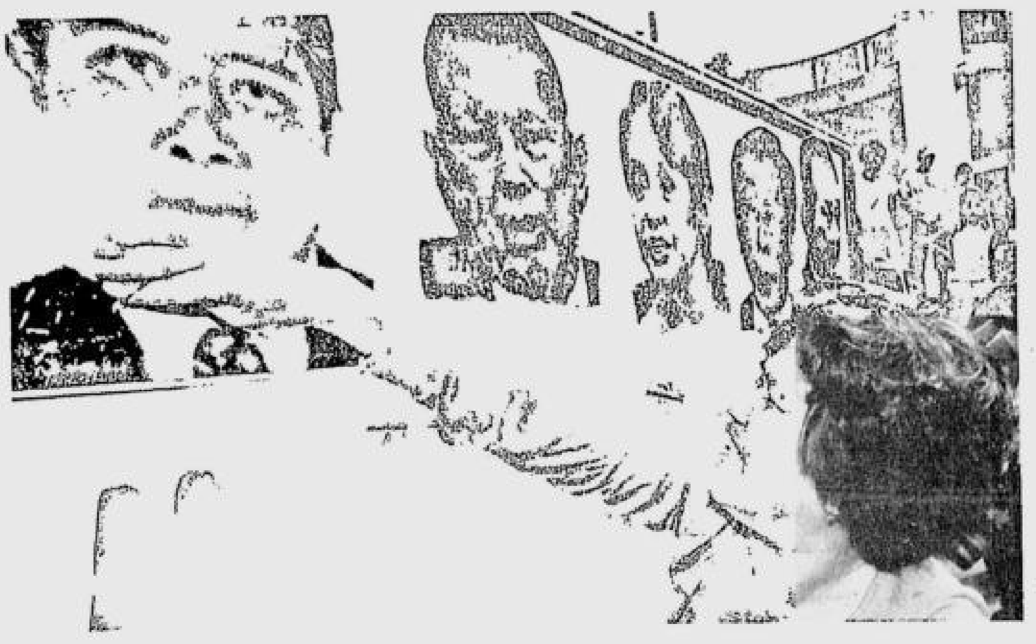
He also assailed the Court of Appeals ruling as "neither here nor there."

Smith was convicted of raping a young Filipino woman, sentenced to life imprisonment and ordered detained by a judge at the Makati City Jail on Dec. 4.

A Malacañang official said President Macapagal-Arroyo had been annoyed by Paredes' criticism of the transfer and decided to let him go.

"There are no implications whatsoever," Senator Arroyo said when asked about the effect of Paredes' resignation on VFACom, reiterating what he said on radio earlier in the morning.

When asked if Paredes was the latest casualty in the RP-US tug-of-war over Smith, the senator tersely said: "Not really. To begin with, policy direction is dictated by Malacañang. As executive director, he merely implements policy.'"



MEMBERS of the militant women's group Amihan throw rotten fruits at the pictures of Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, President Macapagal-Arroyo, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo during a rally at UP Diliman in protest of the US custody of convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

RAFFY LERMA

Indon JI terrorist slain ...

From page A1

member, Abu Hubaida, and two key aides of Janjalani and prominent Abu Sayyaf commander Abu Sulaiman—Ibrahim Hassan and Gadar Abubakar—were also killed in Saturday's clash. One slain man was unidentified.

Troops recovered two M-16 rifles, an M-203 grenade launcher and huge amounts of ammunition on the rebels' boat, Marine spokesperson Lt. Col. Ariel Caculitan said.

Troops were pursuing the militants but they managed to flee from Jolo two days ago. Marines spotted and engaged the group Saturday in a firefight off Tawi-Tawi, he said.

Kidnappings planned

An officer involved in the assault said the military had information that the militants were planning to carry out kidnappings in Tawi-Tawi to raise funds. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

More than 7,000 Army troops and Marines have been hunting the Abu Sayyaf's top leaders and allied Indonesian militants since Aug. 1 but have failed so far to find them. The militants' death on Saturday was among the most important achievements of that campaign, Caculitan said.

Janjalani was reportedly killed in a clash on Jolo in September and troops recovered what were believed to be his remains last month. US forensic experts are helping verify the identity of the body using DNA tests. *Reports from Alcuin Papa in Manila, Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao, and AP*

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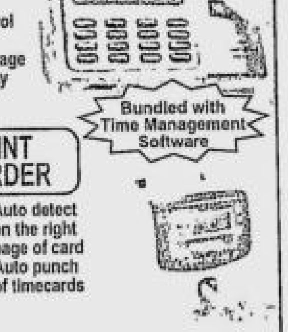

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Seminar	Dates	Days	Time
SUPERVISORY DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING	January 22 - February 2, 2007	M-W-F	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
CREDIT AND COLLECTION MANAGEMENT	January 22 - February 2, 2007	M-W-F	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
CORPORATE PLANNING	January 22 - February 2, 2007	M-W-F	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE TRAINERS	January 23 - February 6, 2007	T-TH	6:00 PM - 8:30 PM
EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING	January 23 - February 6, 2007	T-TH	6:00 PM - 8:30 PM
LAW FOR NON-LAWYERS	January 23 - February 6, 2007	T-TH	6:00 PM - 8:30 PM
ACCOUNTING FOR NON-ACCOUNTANTS	January 20 - February 17, 2007	Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
EFFECTIVE PEST MANAGEMENT	January 20 and 27, 2007	Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
HANDLING COMPLAINTS AND DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS	January 20 and 27, 2007	Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING FOR MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS	January 20, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
HUMAN RELATIONS	January 20, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
TIME AND PRIORITY MANAGEMENT	January 20, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
FRAUD: CAN YOU DETECT ONE?	January 27, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
GRIEVANCE HANDLING	January 27, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
HOW TO DELEGATE WORK & ENSURE IT'S DONE RIGHT	January 27, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
HOW TO START, FINANCE AND MANAGE A BUSINESS	January 21 - February 11, 2007	Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
EXPORT BUSINESS	January 21 - February 11, 2007	Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL CONTROL	January 21 - February 11, 2007	Saturday	9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT	January 21 - February 4, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT	January 21 - February 4, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
SITE DEVELOPMENT AND MASS HOUSING	January 21 - February 4, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM	January 24, 2007	Wednesday	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
PLANNING, DIRECTING AND CONTROLLING THE WORK	January 22, 2007	Monday	6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
EXPORT COSTING, PRICING & CAPITAL COMPUTATION	January 28, 2007	Sunday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
COST SAVINGS & WASTE PREVENTION IN PRODUCTION	January 28, 2007	Sunday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
FINANCIAL ANALYSIS FOR NON-FINANCIAL MGRS.	January 28, 2007	Sunday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
MOTIVATION: KEY TO WINNING	January 26, 2007	Friday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
STEPS IN BUSINESS FORMATION AND ORGANIZATION	January 21, 2007	Sunday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
AVOIDING PITFALLS IN FINANCING	January 28, 2007	Sunday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
EFFECTIVE BUDGETARY CONTROL & PROFIT PLANNING	January 27, 2007	Saturday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

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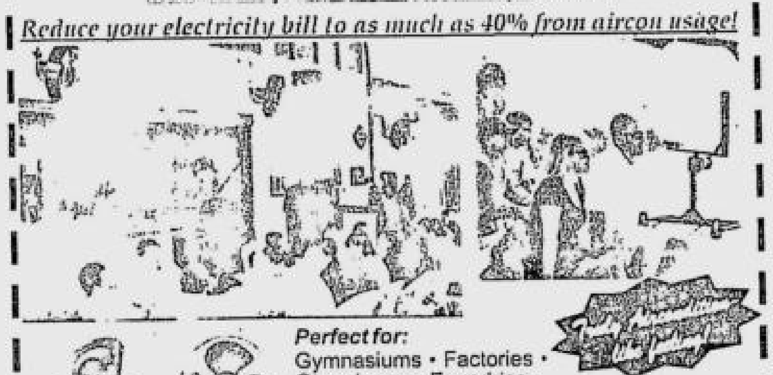

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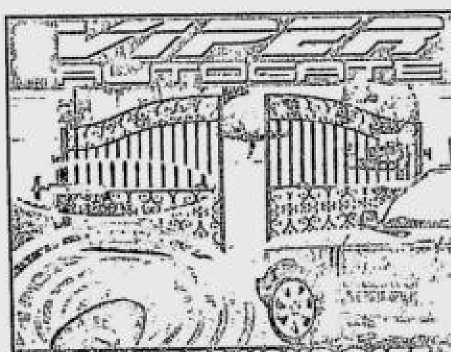

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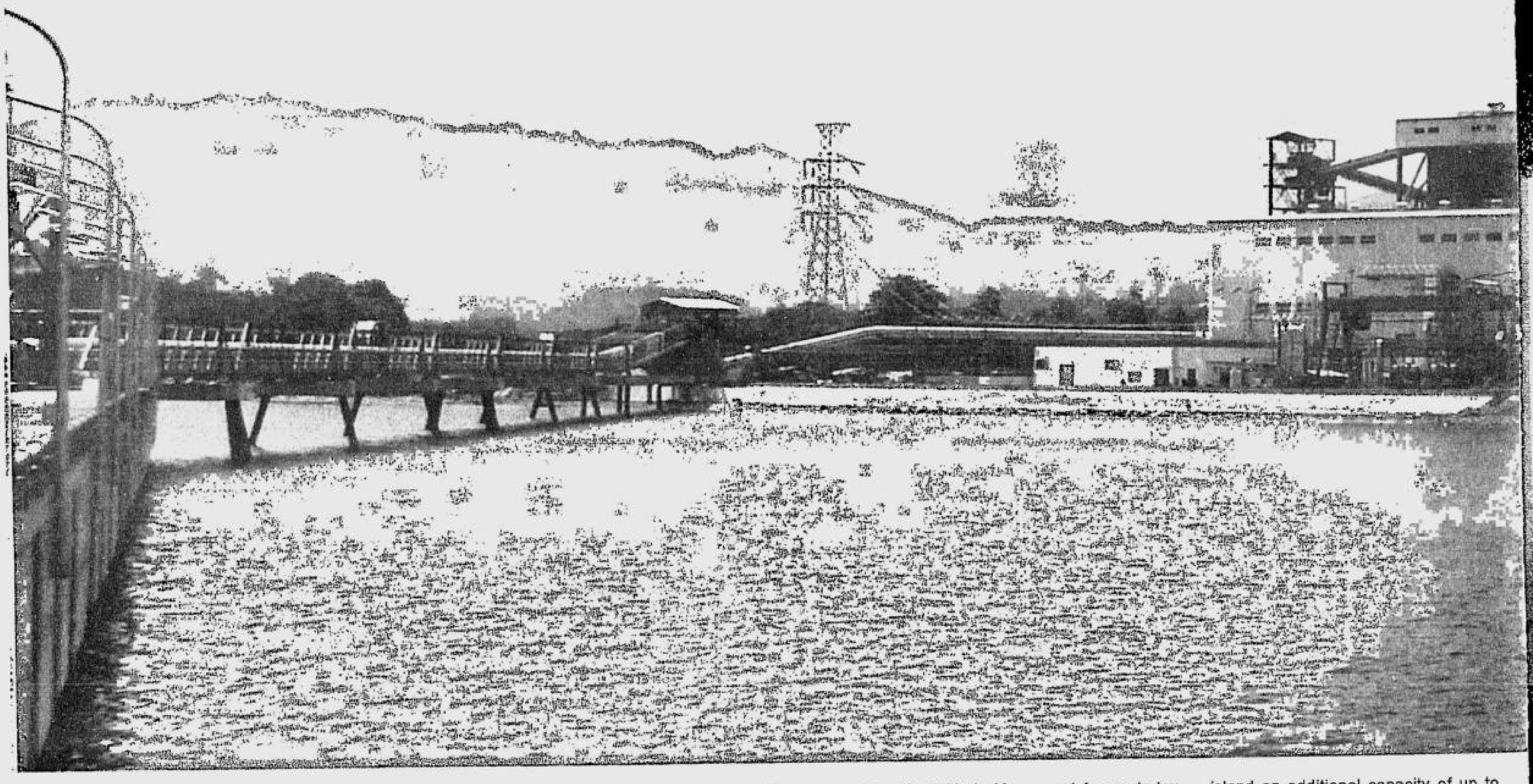
PGMA inaugurates M newest power plant



MESSAGES

H.E, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President, Republic of the Philippines

Congratulations to the STEAG State Power, Inc. for the completion of *Mindanao Power Plant Project* in Misamis Oriental.

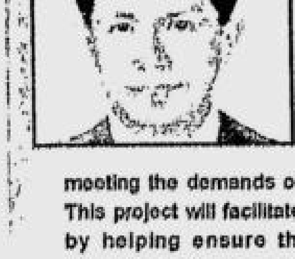
I am delighted to note that the completion of Mindanao's newest and most modern power plant came just in time when the island needs additional capacity to address its increasing power demand. Reliable and stable supply of electricity is one of the requirements to sustain Mindanao's economic growth.

Indeed, there are many challenges ahead as we pursue the vision of setting up super-regions in the country. All sectors must contribute to make this vision a reality, especially those involved in the energy sector.

I am glad that my programs on energy reforms are beginning to show results. With your help, we will be able to beat the odds and give Philippines a better future.

Congratulations and *Mabuhay!*

Hon. Raphael P.M. Lotilla
Secretary, Department of Energy



Congratulations to STEAG State Power, Inc. on the inauguration of its 210 Megawatt Mindanao Power Plant!

The Department of Energy wishes to extend its felicitations to your company for the completion of this power plant, whose timely operation will be crucial in meeting the demands of Mindanao's growing economy. This project will facilitate the development of the region by helping ensure the stability and reliability of electricity in the area, and by diversifying the sources of power.

You have shown your confidence in Mindanao by investing in the construction of this plant, and for this too we commend you. We also commend STEAG State Power, Inc. for its conscientious effort to bring sustainable development in the region through its use of environment-compatible and state-of-the-art technology to produce power while protecting and preserving Mindanao's environment, and for its parallel commitment to assist the development of its host community and its members.

Indeed, this inauguration is a good way to start this New Year. We wish STEAG State Power, Inc. success and look forward to a bright and fruitful 2007.

Mabuhay po kayong lahat!

H.E. Axel Weishaupt
German Ambassador to the Philippines

The inauguration of the Mindanao Power Plant Project of STEAG State Power, Inc. represents a very important moment for the relations of our countries.

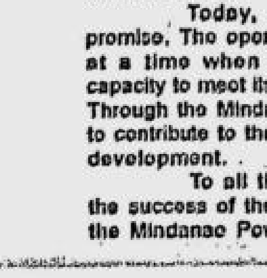
One of the biggest investments of the German power industry in the Republic of the Philippines has now been completed. The energy produced by the power plant will certainly foster the economic development of Mindanao and adjacent islands. Likewise it will supply electric power to more Philippine households and industries and improve the overall infrastructure situation of the island.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Government of the Philippines, the local authorities and all those involved in the project for their cooperation with their German counterpart. Indeed, the support of all partners had ensured success and achievement of this important milestone.

Some difficulties had to be surmounted but in the end all the obstacles were cleared in a spirit of unity and solidarity.

I am convinced that this power plant built with the best German technology will serve many decades for the well-being of the Philippines and as a cornerstone of our good and friendly relations.

Mr. Andreas Rubin
President, STEAG State Power, Inc.

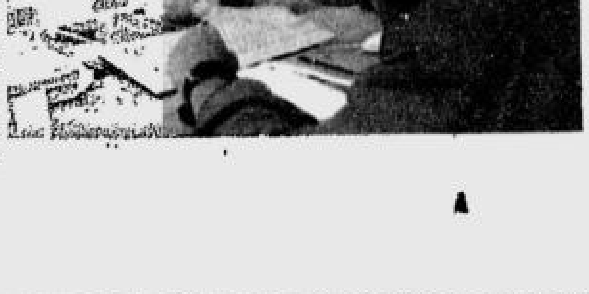


The Inauguration of STEAG State Power, Inc. (SPI) – Mindanao Power Plant today marks an important milestone in the energy sector of Mindanao. For the past three years, SPI has worked with its partners in the government and private sectors to deliver the promise of establishing a new and dependable source of electrical power for Mindanao.

Today, we are delivering on that promise. The operation of the power plant came at a time when Mindanao needs additional capacity to meet its growing demand for electricity. Through the Mindanao Power Plant, we are able to contribute to the island's sustained growth and development.

To all those who have contributed to the success of the project, thank you for making the Mindanao Power Plant a reality.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo today leads local and foreign dignitaries in the inauguration of the Mindanao Power Plant project established by German-owned company STEAG State Power, Inc. (SPI) in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental.



Finished in record time of 35 ½ months, the power plant could not have come at a better time for the country's second largest island and home to a quarter of its people. Its timely completion and operation came at the right moment when the island needs additional capacity to meet its growing power requirement. The plant secures for the island an additional capacity of up to 210megawatts.

For decades, the generation mix in Mindanao consisted of the base load hydro-electric power plants which are highly susceptible to weather conditions and the more expensive peaking diesel power plants. With its capability to supply about 15 per cent of the island's power requirements, the Mindanao power plant, the first of its kind in the region, will provide the much needed additional reliability and stability to the Mindanao grid.

STEAG of Germany, the parent company of SPI, has and will continue to provide the the engineering and environmental expertise developed and updated throughout its 65 years of operating similar plants in Germany.

STEAG is Germany's 5th largest power producer with a combined installed capacity of about 9,000 megawatts including the foreign power plants located in Turkey, Columbia and now, the Philippines.

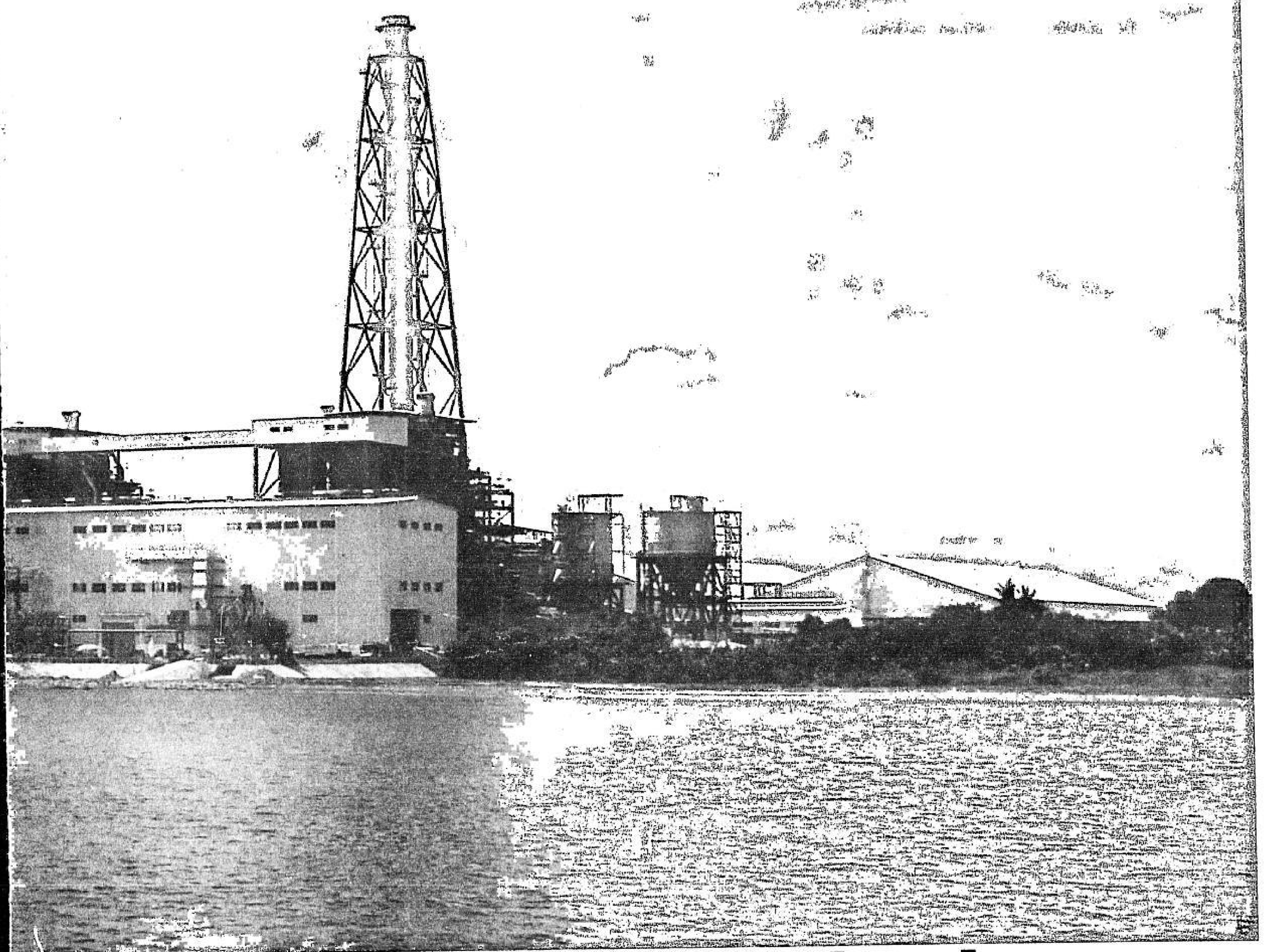
Established at a cost of US$305 million, the project is considered one of Germany's big ticket investments in the Philippines and is providing a highly positive business outlook not only for Mindanao but the entire country as well.

Today's ceremony will be highlighted by the hitting of the *gong* by President Arroyo, symbolizing the start of the plant's 25-year commercial operation on a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) arrangement with the National Power Corporation.

About 500 local and foreign dignitaries that include cabinet officials, local and national government executives, members of the diplomatic community, leaders from local and foreign business and financial institutions, local and foreign press, STEAG Supervisory and Management Boards, and officials from SPI are expected to attend the ceremony.

indanao’s

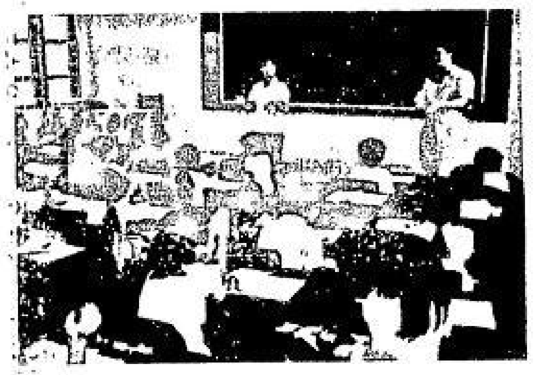
STEAG state
power inc.



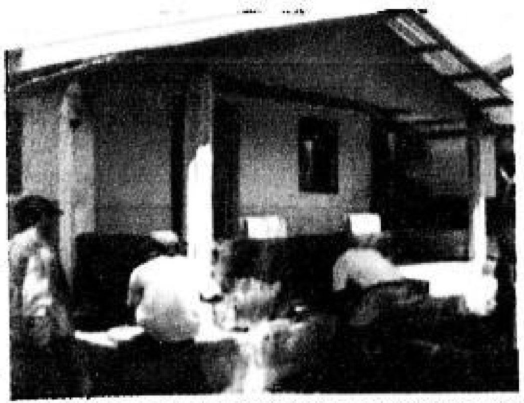
Empowering Mindanao

http://www.steagstatepower.com

Beyond bringing more power to Mindanao's homes and factories, SPI believes there is more to empowering people than supplying electricity for their lights and machinery.



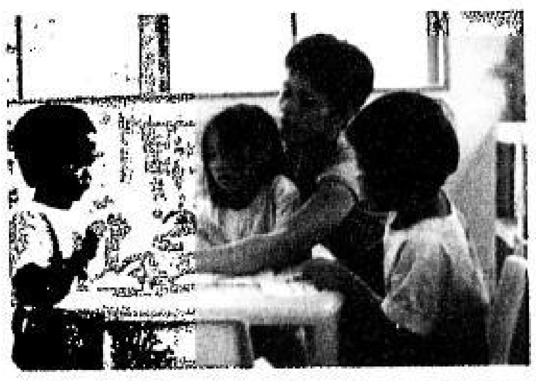
Long before SPI's power plant groundbreaking in 2003, it had already started improving the lot of the people in its host communities and continues to demonstrate corporate responsibility by investing some P40 million for social and environmental projects. Implementation of these projects took effect even before the start of commercial operations.



Fifty-five residents of the 55-hectare project site displaced by the project were provided with new and better homes by SPI at the San Roque GK Village — houses that people themselves built with the help of the Couples for Christ's Gawad Kalinga (GK) project.

Beyond mere habitation, SPI has provided these residents with the means to sustain their livelihood through assistance in setting up an integrated organic vegetable garden, training the men in technical skills that would provide them with employment long after the plant's construction is over, helping the women set up their own livelihood project, a day care center and school for children, and assisting the local education system by refurbishing school rooms and providing textbooks and thousands of school chairs.

In partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, the Villanueva local government, and SPI subcontractors, over 400 out-of-school youth were trained, most of whom were part of the 3,000 construction employees who worked at the project site for three years.



SPI has also improved local health centers and increased residents' access to health services by enrolling 1,350 indigent families in the government's socialized medical insurance program.

Aside from using modern technologies to ensure an environment-friendly plant operations, SPI has embarked on a comprehensive environmental protection program that includes a 1,200-hectare reforestation in upland Cagayan de Oro City, that serves as Mindanao's first ever *carbon sink* project, and another 1,000-hectare urban forestry project for its host communities in Misamis Oriental. SPI is also implementing a Coastal Resource Development Program that includes mangrove and beach rehabilitation, establishment of marine reserves for sea grass and coral reefs, riverbank stabilization project, and ecological solid waste management.

The quest is off to a good start, with a good measure of the project's capital and operational expenses pumping fresh dynamism into Mindanao's economy. After three good years capped by the attainment of what many called an ambitious timetable, SPI's Mindanao Power Plant Project has become a reality that will continue to empower the island and its people in the next quarter of a century and beyond.

As SPI President Andreas Rubin puts it, *"We may not be able to change the world with this project but at least we can make a difference in the lives of the people who live near us."*

Globalizing a town in Northern Mindanao

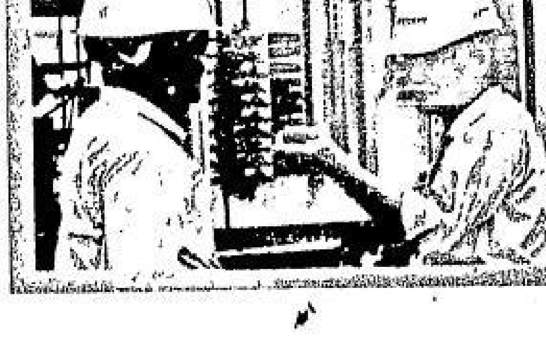
Much has been written about the remarkable stories of the Mindanao Power Plant Project, but one of its most interesting aspects is the global and multi-national nature of the project implementation.

Encouraged by the project's potential and the Philippines positive investment prospects, STEAG was able to convince European, Japanese and local banks to help finance the Mindanao project.

Aside from being STEAG's first venture in Asia, the Mindanao Power Plant Project is also the first time that foreign companies such as Kawasaki Plant Construction and Kawasaki Heavy Industries were tapped to be major project contractors of a STEAG power plant.

It is also the first project in STEAG's history to utilize global sourcing, with materials and equipment supply coming from at least 14 countries all over the globe, including Canada, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Japan and the Philippines.

Moreover, the Mindanao Power Plant project was put together by a multinational work force composed of the Germans as investors and providers of technical supervision and management during construction, commissioning and plant operation; the Japanese as main project contractors; and the more than 3,000 Filipinos who provided the needed skilled labor during construction.



The power plant operations and maintenance will be provided by about 180 highly qualified Filipinos undertaking managerial, technical and administrative functions.

This breakthrough achievement in a remote Southern Philippines town is the product of an international concerted effort of experts. Combined with the Filipinos' diligence and work ethics, the project will surely lift the standard of living in the developing areas of Mindanao Island.

The project also presents a unique opportunity for German-Philippine cultural exchange and highlights the potentials for brighter and stronger partnerships in the future.

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OPINION

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Who pays for UP?

EDITORIAL

IN AN IDEAL WORLD, A CLEAR-SIGHTED NATIONAL leadership will reserve a generous chunk of the government budget to meet all the needs of all the country's public education institutions. In that idyllic realm, grateful alumni will trip over each other to donate some money back to their university, perhaps to endow a professorial chair, or sponsor a forum, or fund a new research center. And—ideally—in that academic paradise, incoming students will eagerly sign a pledge to render public service in return for their publicly funded education.

Sadly for all of us, the world in which the state-owned University of the Philippines finds itself is far from ideal. By most accounts, the UP, the country's best school, is struggling to keep pace with the 21st century. A big part of the problem is financial: at a time when it should be concentrating on becoming one of Asia's great universities, it has to contend with diminishing state subsidies.

A big part of the solution lies in increasing income from tuition. Much has been said about the specifics and even the assumptions behind the proposal of UP president Emerlinda Roman to bring "tuition policy and structure" up to date—a proposal based on studies conducted by two committees, and approved by the UP Board of Regents on Dec. 15.

But much of the criticism against the tuition plan can be reduced to the following position: the very idea of sourcing income from public school students is abhorrent. As the chair of the UP student council said not too long ago: "They tell us that it's not the government's role to subsidize tertiary education, but we believe otherwise."

In an ideal world, we would share that article of faith too. It is a dream right out of Plato: gather the best students, give them all they need to grow into upstanding citizens and outstanding leaders, and let the state, which after all is only providing for its own future, worry about the cost.

But in the real world, there ain't no such thing as a free education. We are the state; we make up the community of taxpayers and lenders; we do the worrying about costs.

And in our corner of the real world, only basic education is a constitutional right. We look forward to the day when our Constitution can mandate, and our level of economic development can afford, college education for all. But in the meantime, what do we do?

We must do what we can. That, it seems to us, is the main merit in the Roman plan; it recognizes the true extent of UP's financial constraints, studied the options in depth, and then mustered the political will to recommend viable but possibly unpopular courses of action.

The controversy over the tuition issue, it is easy to see, has obscured other efforts to generate the funds UP needs. Tuition fee increases have always served as the entry-level issue for emerging student activists (even more so in private schools). But beyond that, the opposition from some highly articulate academics from UP itself has provoked public debate.

UP Prof. Roland Simbulan's powerful plea to study the matter further, published in the INQUIRER several days ago, is characteristic of that opposition. It makes for compelling reading but, on reflection, we find it is so because it is ultimately based on an appeal to emotion: that a committee proposal based on a reasonable self-interest premise libels all UP students as "sinners or liars"; that a subsidy-granting program's reasonable requirement for verification of financial statements (standard in modern-day transactions) is an unconscionable attack on privacy; that Roman's reasonable, real-world arguments are nothing but "rhetoric."

But Simbulan commits the unpardonable act himself. "'Those who can afford should pay more.' This is the principle on which the tuition increase is based. Are the families with an annual income of P81,000 up to P135,000 rich enough so that they shall now pay P300 per unit plus full miscellaneous fees?"

Do you see it? His argument is based on a conflation of "can afford" with "rich enough." The Roman plan is based, in part, on the idea that that particular income bracket (among others) can afford to pay more; Simbulan's opposition is based, in part, on deliberately mislabeling that bracket (and others) as "not rich." In the real world, that kind of thinking has unkind consequences.

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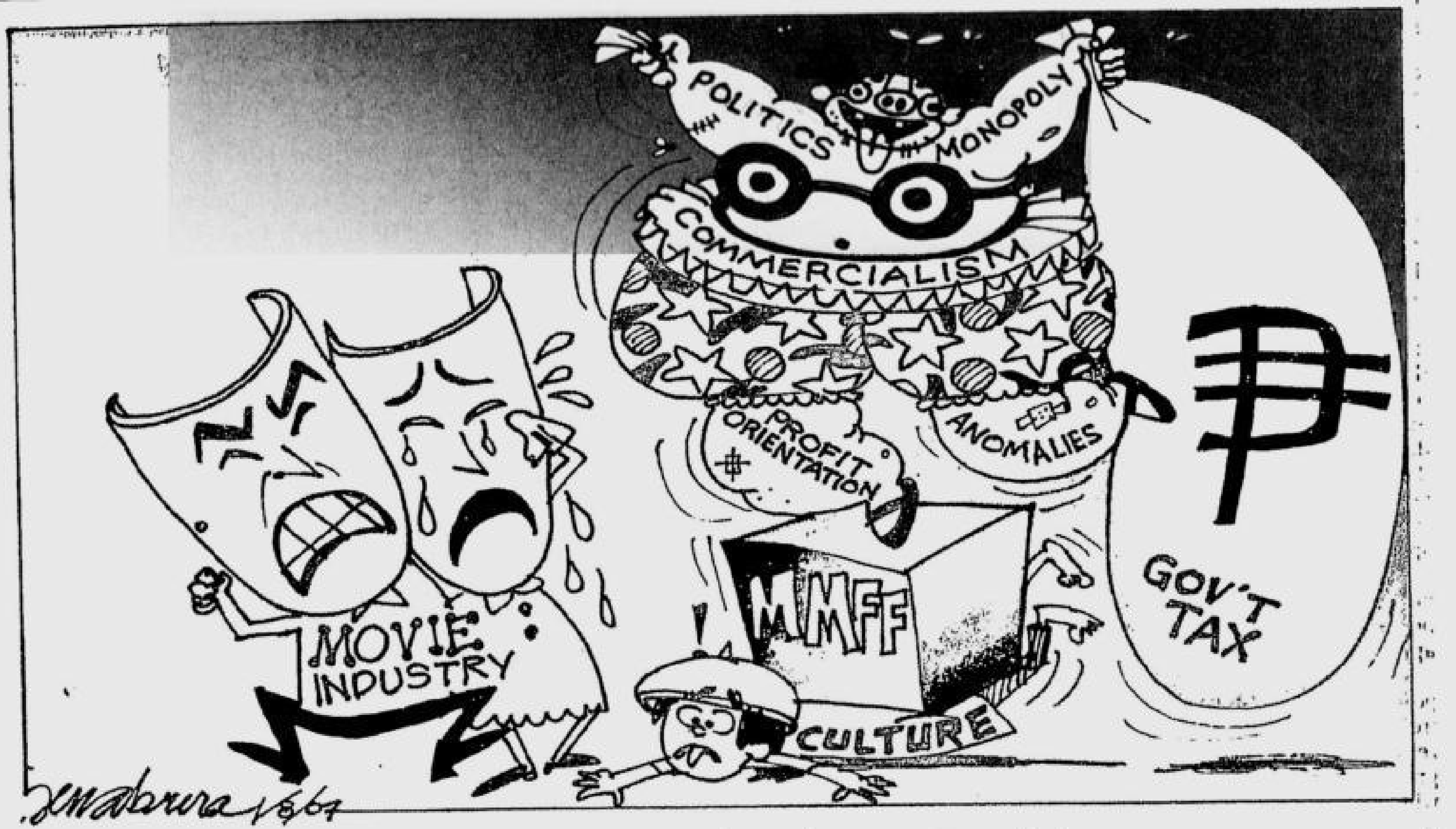

Malacañang panicked on Smith case

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

PANIC. THAT WAS WHAT FORCED MALACAÑANG to hurriedly transfer convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy in the dead of night.

A little bird who has a nest in the Palace told me that the Palace got a tip that the Court of Appeals would reject the government petition seeking to overturn Judge Benjamin Pozon's decision denying US jurisdiction over Smith. It is also possible that the suggestion to transfer Smith before the decision could be handed out might have come from a justice.

Malacañang was already frantic over the cancellation by the Americans of the Balikatan exercises—coming as it did on the heels of many feelers and pressures through diplomatic channels—in protest against the continued incarceration of Smith in a Philippine jail. With the leak that the government appeal would be rejected, President Macapagal-Arroyo panicked and called his closest advisers to an emergency meeting in the Palace.

"What can we do?" she asked them. The panic must have spread to her advisers, the little bird said. They were all aware what the United States, and especially an angry President George W. Bush, could do to a small, poor Third World country like the Philippines.

The little bird does not remember who first suggested that Smith be spirited out of the Makati jail immediately, to beat the decision of the Court of Appeals. "It" said the suggestion might have originated from inside the Court of Appeals itself, but that it is not sure of that fact.

Anyway, the group (henceforth to be known as the "Filipino Benedict Arnolds") decided to brazen it out and hand Smith to US authorities that same night.

They knew that what they were doing was wrong, that it violated the Constitution, the laws and the Rules of Court; but they also knew what an angry US government could do, openly or clandestinely, to the administration.

The alibi of beating the traffic as the reason for transferring Smith in the dead of night started only as a joke, the little bird said, but obviously Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno couldn't think of a better excuse.

And so we have another crisis as serious as the discovery of the Garci tapes, just because a horny American GI couldn't control his libido.

* * *

The decision of the Court of Appeals is a perfect example of "*namamangka sa dalawang ilog* (boating in two rivers)" or riding two horses. Lawyers have a descriptive term for it: "*bakla*."

The Court of Appeals agreed with Judge Pozon that, with the end of the trial and the conviction of Smith, jurisdiction over Smith already belonged to the Philippines. However, it dodged the issue of the illegal handover of Smith to the US embassy, saying it was moot, the deed having been done, and so let it go. The appeals court has the authority to order the return of Smith to Philippine authorities, the transfer being an illegal act. But it chose to condone that illegal act. Maybe, the court was thinking that it could not do anything if the US Embassy ignored its order to return Smith to Philippine jurisdiction.

But that's the job of the executive—to enforce an order of the court. Even if the executive is unable to do that, ordering what is legal would have been better than yielding to an illegal act.

With that decision as precedent, the way is now open for litigants to beat the law by preempting a negative court decision—that is, by doing what a decision seeks to prevent, thus making the decision moot.

The lawyers of Nicole can elevate the appellate court's decision to the Supreme Court. We can only hope that the high court will have the courage to rule what is right. The tribunal already has a black mark on its record—during the term of Chief Justice Hilario Davide—when it ruled as legal the illegal takeover of the presidency by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from Joseph Estrada.

These two cases—the Macapagal-Estrada case and the Smith case—will forever be a blot on the Philippine judiciary. Lawyers and law students will always be talking about the cases, and the discussions will not be flattering to our justices.

Let me refresh your memory on the Macapagal-Estrada case. The Constitution provides that the President can be replaced only in case of (1) death; (2) permanent disability; (3) resignation; and (4) impeachment.

Estrada is not dead; he is not disabled; he has not resigned; and the impeachment proceeding against him was not finished. His prosecutors walked out of the Senate. So how come GMA was allowed to replace him?

The Davide Court ruled that Estrada "resigned" via a "constructive resignation"—meaning, he was presumed to have resigned although there was no letter of resignation in existence. How did the justices come to that conclusion? From the diary of his executive secretary, Edgardo Angara, and from newspaper reports!

Neither Angara nor his diary nor the newspaper reports were ever presented as evidence; so they could not have had any probative value legally. Yet Estrada, the highest official of the land, was removed from office. Estrada was elected President by the people with several million more votes than his rivals, the biggest vote in the history of the Philippines. But he was removed from office on the say-so of only 15 justices of the Supreme Court.

Davide could have cited the prosecutors for contempt for walking out of the Senate impeachment proceedings, but he did not. And if the prosecutors did not return, he should have declared the impeachment process a failure, and Estrada would have remained President. But they wanted Estrada out so much the justices invented a non-existent resignation as the excuse to replace Estrada with GMA.

And look what is happening to us now.

Courage

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I GOT THE TEXT MESSAGES IN THE MIDDLE of last week: My good friend, Harry Roque, had just got a number of death threats via his cell phone.

One text message read (I've spelled out the text abbreviations and added punctuations; otherwise I've retained the original sentence constructions) "Dura lex sed lex, our law may be harsh but it's still our law. Not all the time are you lucky. Your end is near and your family." Another read: "Atty. Roque RIP. *Kami sa Bagong Hukbong Bayan ay patuloy ang pagmamanman sa mga ginagawa mong kataksilan sa bayan. Muli kaming magbabala* to shut your fishy mouth. (Atty. Roque. RIP. We, the New Army of the Nation, have noted your treacherous acts against the nation. We repeat our warning: Shut your fishy mouth)."

And yet another message read: "To all interested parties: We are giving away P5 million/$100,000 reward for the capture of Atty. Harry Roque, dead or alive. Atty. Roque is lawyer of terrorist communist group in the Philippines. A destabilizer, insurgent, an anti-American. Caution: He's armed and dangerous."

I can imagine how unnerved my friend must be. I saw him on TV last Thursday, a little subdued, which is saying a lot in light of Harry being normally bouncy and full of energy. He has already reported the incident to the police, though I doubt that he expects to get any results. Indeed, though I doubt that he hasn't thought that the police might be more sympathetic to the issuers of the threats than to him. But like I said, I can imagine how it must weigh on him: Never mind the death threats to one's self, mind only the mention of family.

Who might want to do Harry harm? Well, as all the world's sleuths say, who stands most to gain from it? The messages accuse Harry of betraying the nation. I do know that he has figured prominently in two particular cases. One is the "Joc-joc" Bolante case, where he has been busy trying to get a deposition from the former Department of Agriculture official charged with supplying administration congressional candidates, even those in the pit of urban jungles, with fertilizer funds. Bolante is currently being held in an American jail apparently for violating US immigration rules. He is wanted by the Philippine Senate, whose summons he has repeatedly spurned. Harry has monitored his whereabouts in the United States with the doggedness of a bloodhound.

Two is the class suit against Mike Arroyo—also so called, for reasons that do violence to the English language, the First Gentleman—filed by the 43 journalists he has filed libel suits against. It's the first class suit of its kind filed anywhere in the world. The plaintiffs are suing Arroyo for abuse of power, among many other abuses, professional and existential. It is the brainchild of Harry, and he himself prepared the brief for it. He filed it only a couple of weeks ago, which was much publicized in the media.

I agree with the people who sent the text messages: Harry is armed and dangerous. But he is armed only with the weapons of his principles and convictions, and he is dangerous only to people with neither. His accusers accuse him of betraying the nation. Pray, what do they hold as being true to the nation? Ruling without an electoral mandate? Using the money that belongs to dirt-poor farmers to give to *tongressmen* so that they can pay off officials to cheat for them? Defending a rule that has turned lying, cheating, stealing—and now murder—into instruments of national policy?

Of course, one cannot discount the possibility that the threat is the handiwork of pranksters who have nothing better to do, or annoyers-for-hire who routinely call up TV stations and write letters to the editors to express their undying support to an occupation government. But even if so, the text messages to Harry may not be so blithely dismissed as of little consequence. It is a humongous crime, which I lay at the doorstep of the illegal occupants of Malacañang.

What makes it so is the climate of murder that, more than El Niño and La Niña, has this country in its grip, a climate of murder that the current illegal occupants of Malacañang have caused directly or indirectly, tacitly or expressly, by commission or by commission. This country isn't just becoming the murder capital of the world, it has become so. At least it has become the political-murder capital of the world.

The murders have spread from journalists and political activists in the countryside to political public figures themselves. Last December alone, we saw the murder of a congressman (Luis Bersamin) and the near-murder of another (Dudut Jaworski). With none of these murders being greeted by the shock and violent outrage they deserve. Certainly, with none of them finding government unduly embarrassed. Murder has not just become prevalent in this country, it has become an acceptable political option for dealing with "the enemy" in this country. And it is escalating daily, the violence being as much real in the threat as in the execution. The rules, written or unwritten, no longer apply. They are being broken as we speak. Nothing is inconceivable anymore.

During Cory's, Ramos' and Erap's time, somebody threatens you with bodily harm, you laughed it off. During GMA's time, somebody threatens you with death, you take it deathly seriously.

I don't know though that it will stop Harry from doing what he finds himself compelled to do. Yes, compelled, as in morally compelled, as in needing to do what is right, amid adversity, amid derision, amid the threat to life itself. Some people have that capacity: the only thing they find more odious than betraying the nation is betraying themselves.

The courageous ones are not those who are afraid of nothing. They are those who push on despite their fears.

The Smith case, once more

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

YES, WE MUST HONOR THE TREATIES WE have entered into. *Pacta sunt servanda* states a fundamental obligation of any civilized nation. Frankly, however, I do not understand how our government reads the treaty.

But it must also be admitted that the matter is complicated by the fact that the Smith case is not an ordinary criminal case; it is one which also involves foreign relations. And foreign relations are primarily under the direction of the President. Hence there is a need to make the delicate and difficult balance between law and order on the one hand, and foreign relations on the other. What the government and the Court of Appeals did was to attempt to strike a balance but with results that are far from felicitous.

Let us begin with the complications arising from the treaty itself. A key provision says: "**In the event Philippine judicial proceedings are not completed within one year, the United States shall be relieved of any obligations under this paragraph.**" Our government has taken the the position that the "judicial proceedings" referred to by this provision did not end with the conviction of Smith but carries into the period of appeal. Hence, the proceedings are not yet over.

But what do you make of the sentence that immediately follows, which says: "**The one-year period will not include the time necessary to appeal.**"

What is the consequence of our government's position? Again we must look to the text of the treaty. It says: "**. . . the United States shall be relieved of any obligation under this paragraph . . .**" And what, pray, is the obligation of which the United States has been relieved? Again we go to the text: to "**make such personnel available to [Philippine] authorities in time for any investigative or judicial proceedings relating to the offense with which the person has been charged.**"

In simple terms, since our government has agreed that "judicial proceedings" were not terminated within one year, our government in effect agrees that the United States no longer has any obligation to produce Smith.

It so happened, however, that Smith was in the custody of Philippine authorities. Should the government allow the bird in hand to fly back to the bush? That the government did, and dramatically. In a supreme act of generosity, our government spirited Smith out of the Makati City Jail and surrendered him to the US Embassy. In other words, the government is equivalently saying to the United States, "He is your baby; you have no obligation to give him back to us. You can send him to Okinawa for all we care." As Alice in Wonderland would put it, things have gotten "curioser and curioser."

Our government made it conveniently easy for the United States. The American government did not have to resort to what it did in the Alvarez-Machain extradition case. In that case, Mexico refused to extradite Dr. Alvarez-Machain to the United States; but the latter managed to have the person kidnapped and brought to the United States where he was arrested. In our case, Smith did not have to be kidnapped! He was surrendered on a silver platter.

Other curious things have been happening about this case. Recall that the President's legal adviser said that she had nothing to do with the transfer of Smith. The good adviser seems to have forgotten a basic principle which every first year law student has to recite, namely that the acts of department heads in the ordinary performance of their functions are presumed to be the acts of the President unless she expressly reprobates them. The adviser's announcement makes one wonder who really is running the Philippine show. But the President eventually came out to contradict her adviser and say that the transfer was her call after all. Still we must ask: Who is really calling the shots?

Comes now the Court of Appeals. Its decision is being described as Solomonic. The Court ruled that Judge Benjamin Pozon ordered correctly that Smith be confined temporarily in the Makati jail. But Pozon himself had said that he would honor whatever agreement the Philippine government and the United States might reach on the place of Smith's confinement as provided for in the Visiting Forces Agreement. But the Court of Appeals did Pozon one better: the Court found nothing wrong in the fact that the government spirited Smith away in the dead of night without waiting for the decision of the Court of Appeals which had been sought by the government itself. The Court did not seem to care that the executive department had thumbed its nose at the judiciary.

Note that earlier Malacañang had said that the government would wait for the Court's decision. Again, one might ask: Who is really calling the shots?

Comes now the executive director of the Presidential Commission on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom). He accuses the government, not implausibly, of taking the law into its own hands. In reaction, the government not only threatens to fire him but also to disband the VFA-.Com. It is the Charles Lamb principle at work: Burn the house to roast a pig!

The whole affair would be funny if it were not painful for the people concerned. Holmes did say that hard cases make bad laws. But it would not have been a hard case if the treaty had been in less sloppy shape. The root of the comedic affair is the ambiguities in the treaty itself. The Executive Homer nodded in negotiating the treaty and the Senate Homer likewise nodded in ratifying it and the government just decided to muscle its way through. Marvelous! Meanwhile, the Court of Appeals simply pleaded that the judiciary, without money or guns, is the least dangerous branch.

Treaties and entreaties

COMMENTARY

Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino

THERE IS NOTHING MORE DELETERIOUS TO the cause of academic inquiry than entreaties (and alternatively, threats) calculated to derail the sobriety that logical and legal analysis demands. Nicole's case raises important questions of international and constitutional law. It is with the latter issues I am interested in. Nicole is important and so is US Marine Daniel Smith because persons always are. But my concern is with the important questions of law.

Why, it is asked, was Smith, a convicted felon, turned over to American authorities in contravention of the Rules of Court? It will be well to remind ourselves that although temporary liberty through bail is not a matter of right after conviction, it can nevertheless be applied for through a motion addressed to the sound discretion of the court. That a convict can therefore be set free, albeit provisionally, pending appeal (or the resolution of a petition for a prerogative writ) is neither extraordinary, much less irregular. In cases involving American servicemen covered by the Visiting Forces Agreement, Article V, paragraph 6 contains the operative provision: "The custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with United States military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings."

The United States has requested for custody of Smith, and the important term statutory construction is "shall"; and no lawyer or student of law will dispute the crucial difference between "shall" and "may." Are judicial proceedings complete? That raises an interesting question for legal hermeneutics, but judgments are said to attain finality when all avenues of appeal have been exhausted or when the period of appeal has lapsed and none has been taken.

Why should the provisions of the VFA bind us? The more direct answer is: because we chose to be bound by them. That is the essence of treaty-making, and that is the fountainhead of all of international law—the consent of states to be bound by norms, whether conventional or customary. Whether or not the VFA should be scrapped or denounced is a subject for another discussion, but what we are looking into here is the congruence of myriad entreaties with varying degrees of visceral appeal to the state of the law in this jurisdiction. *Pacta sunt servanda*. Agreements must be complied with. This is so basic a tenet of international co-existence that its demise would be incalculably detrimental to the Philippines, including those who demand that the government burn the VFA and catapult its ashes to the moon.

What about Philippine law? What about the Rules of Court? The Supreme Court, in several decisions, has held that while international law cannot claim superiority over Philippine law—particularly over the Constitution, neither can international law be ignored without trivializing the Constitution that makes international law effective in two ways: first, by a clause incorporating "generally accepted principles of international law" into the law of the land; second, by making treaties that have obtained Senate concurrence effective in this jurisdiction. In other words, treaties and statutes have the same force and are of equal rank. In fact, in one intellectual property case resolved through a *ponencia* of our new Chief Justice, the Supreme Court ruled that treaties may support causes of action or defenses, even absent statutory provision.

The common-sense doctrine that states may not invoke their municipal law to shirk their obligations under international law will also be profitably remembered because common sense does not enjoy much currency these days. The VFA, insofar as custody of US servicemen is concerned, creates a special clause for them—a clause that is as much a part of Philippine law as the provisions of the Rules of Court and other statutes. There is a canon of statutory construction—*generalia specialibus non derogate*, general provisions do not derogate from the special—canonized by the high court's acceptance and application. I cannot in all honesty make much sense of the entreaty that we render obeisance to Philippine law rather than to American domination. That may be a very convincing line for a "hate America" campaign, but it is the science of jurisprudence with which we are supposed to be dealing.

Then of course, there is the perennial whipping-girl of the Republic of the Philippines—the President. She is now charged with having usurped the powers of the judiciary by ordering the release of Smith to American authorities. I thought that it was basic political law that the conduct of foreign affairs—which includes the enforcement of treaties and international agreements—was constitutionally allocated to the executive. If this remains true—and I have not been convinced that it is not so—then the President was in fact carrying out the task the Constitution had assigned her. Should she enjoy this power? Again, that is subject for another discussion. American jurisprudence has been most deferential to the executive in this respect. Traditionally it has been the judicial attitude to exercise restraint, lest the executive be embarrassed and hampered in its exercise of its functions relative to foreign relations. I hate to think that embarrassing the executive has become our national policy.

None of what I have taken up is really new—and that is what amazes me, because in the prodigal exchange of opinions and learned views, what is elemental, settled and basic has been eclipsed by rhetoric.

Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino is dean of the Graduate School of Law of San Beda College and chair of the Department of Jurisprudence and Legal Philosophy, Philippine Judicial Academy, Supreme Court of the Philippines.

Out of touch

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE JOKE FROM THE PINK PANTHER SHOULD be familiar. Inspector Clouseau sits beside a man and a dog. Clouseau smiles at the man and the dog. "Does your dog bite?" Clouseau asks the man. The man says, "No." Clouseau pets the dog, which promptly bites him. Clouseau protests: "I thought you said your dog does not bite!" The man looks at Clouseau and the dog and says, "That is not my dog."

Nature bit Southeast Asia when an earthquake in Taiwan cut several submarine cables, leading to a regional slowdown in Internet speeds, which we feel up to the present. Our government has hardly taken notice of the fact, as the man who witnessed Clouseau being bitten by a dog. Not even with a dry "but it's not our fault." Media and the telecom companies have reacted similarly—that is, they have **hardly** reacted at all.

In Singapore, angry letters were sent to the controlled press, expressing dissatisfaction with the government's emergency response—shifting traffic from undersea cables to satellites. In Hong Kong, the Telecom Authority assumed emergency powers; in Indonesia, it was decreed that aid workers would have priority with regard to Internet usage. Last Saturday, Telekom Malaysia (TM) issued a thorough update on the causes for the Internet slowdown, its extent and how long it would last.

It then went on to look toward the future: "This episode has clearly pointed out how dependent the Asian countries are on these links and it has certainly persuaded many providers, TM included, to rethink our respective business continuity strategies for the future in view of the Pacific basin's susceptibility to natural disasters." Online, I've seen people point out US investment to prevent such a catastrophic scenario. India, too, has invested in many alternate routes so as to avoid being unduly dependent on a few cables.

At home, PLDT sent an informative e-mail to its Internet subscribers soon after the earthquake. It hasn't sent any updates since—and certainly with nowhere near the detail in TM's. A PLDT official did make soothing reassurances: the company is "doing their best." A customer appreciates reassurances, but expects more than assurances based on faith. In the information age, the lack of information, even about things beyond a company's control, only leads to suspicions that the company isn't quite up to speed.

For example, it took an entry in a Singaporean blog to show that there's a ray of sunshine on the horizon: a new submarine cable is in the works, and the Philippines is part of the consortium. The blogger, James Seng, says "the new 20,000 km Asia-America Gateway (AAG) is likely to follow the North Asia route ... since the members include AiTi (Brunei), CAT Telekom (Thailand), PLDT (Philippines), REACH (Hong Kong), StarHub (Singapore) and VNPT (Vietnam) led by Telecom Malaysia (Malaysia)." This is good, because it provides another cable; it's bad, Seng says, because it follows the path that has proven so troublesome—going through the regional earthquake belt.

An anonymous commenter proposed an alternate route: "A reasonable alternative route to the usual North Asia path would be SG or Malaysia or eastern Thailand, and then to either Philippines or Viet Nam, then to Guam and then to Hawaii, then over to North America. The fibre routes that transit Guam from east, west and south were not harmed by this incident. Although Guam looks small ... lots of potential for traffic add/drop there because it is the western-most US territory in the mid-Pacific. [1] Manila and Viet Nam also have a fair bit of add/drop potential, particularly southern parts of Viet Nam where the newest 'tiger' economy is booming."

Now these are solutions in ordinary people's blogs; but no forward-thinking seems to be emanating from Filipinos. For the tens of thousands of Filipinos gainfully employed—most of them young people who have been affected by the Taiwan earthquake—the only person who had anything to say was a foreigner: Peter Wallace, who in his Friday column focused on the call center industry: 150,000 employees over 120 call centers, he said, were affected, totally cut off from their clients on the day of the earthquake, with capacity still down by 40 percent three days after the quake.

Wallace pointed out how neighboring governments and telecom companies moved heaven and earth to restore the flow of data, or at least prioritize traffic so that businesses were less handicapped than they otherwise might have been. Some governments found their investments in existing submarine cables or telecom companies paying off, in terms of clout: they could shove aside countries (like the Philippines) which have no investments or other means to demand priority access to the pipelines.

This means, he said, that future expansion might be affected since the country wasn't able to respond swiftly—in fact, it seemed to him it didn't even respond at all. And he was just talking about the call center industry. There are others: medical transcriptionists, online tutors in English, Math and other subjects; editors, copy writers, animators, web designers, and so on.

We're poised to finally play host to the Asean Summit in Cebu, which finally will allow the Queen City of the South to put its best foot forward. However an opportunity to do something tangible is going to be missed, because the only things government will be concentrating on are beautification and crowd management. The Philippines has a timely opportunity to make a call to action for a concerted effort to do something about the regional slowdown in Internet traffic, but our country won't. It only shows how divorced our political situation is from reality, and how out of touch our leadership is from the modern world.

From 'Pinoy' to Fil-Am

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

HONOLULU—THE FILIPINO CENTENNIAL IN HAWAII, which started with a bang in December 2005 has ended with a bigger bang—with Martin Nievera belting out an awesome hour of entertainment and humor recalling his childhood in Hawaii. It's time for reflection on the meaning of this milestone event, which will not happen again until the year 2106.

When I was in the Philippines last July giving lectures on the centennial theme of "a hundred years and beyond," not many Filipinos knew what was being "celebrated" in Hawaii. Some said that Filipino musicians came to Hawaii when it was still a monarchy in the 19th century, and to places like Louisiana as far back as the 18th century when the galleon trade was still operating between Manila and Acapulco. These facts are correct.

In fact, as early as 1587, the Spanish galleon La Nuestra Señora de Esperanza anchored in Morro Bay, California with a crew that included a small number of "Luzones Indios." They were known to be the first Filipino arrivals in America. In those days, Filipinos were regularly sailing across the Pacific in the galleons and many would just jump ship. A certain Antonio Miranda, believed to be of Filipino ancestry, was one of the founders of what is now Los Angeles in 1781.

I also got a letter saying that the "*pensionados*" sent to the United States to study or obtain further training in government arrived as early as 1903 on the East Coast or Midwest. Again this is correct.

So, what about 1906 for which the Hawaii centennial was observed with fanfare, and with no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo and former President Fidel Ramos attending the ceremonies? This was the year 15 Filipinos, known to have come from the Northern Luzon coastal areas like Candon, Ilocos Sur, were recruited by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) to work on the sugar plantations in Hawaii. They were accompanied on the S.S. Doric by HSPA recruiter A.F. Judd. They arrived in Honolulu harbor on Dec. 6, 1906, met with the curious stares of Hawaii residents who had never seen Filipinos before. Many Filipinos from the Visayas were also among the early recruits.

That initial voyage of the 15 "*sakadas*" prefigured the continuous recruitment of thousands of Filipinos to work for "King Cane," as sugar was then called. By the 1930s, their number had grown to some 125,000 and thus they replaced the Japanese as the dominant plantation workforce. In 1946, before the Philippines regained its independence from the United States, 6,000 more Ilocanos arrived in Hawaii constituting the last group of plantation "*sakadas*." After World War II, many returned to the Philippines or moved on to California or other states. But before long, the immigration laws were liberalized to admit large numbers of Filipino professionals and non-agricultural workers, causing their numbers to swell.

The major distinctions in Hawaii now are the Filipino immigrants who continue to arrive at the rate of about 4,000 yearly, and the local Filipinos born in Hawaii or other parts of the United States. The former are sometimes called "Pinoys" by the Filipinos themselves. Earlier, in the plantation era, they were called "*manongs*," which had pejorative connotations. It was a time of stereotypes, but the stereotyping has somewhat disappeared as more educated Filipino immigrants began to arrive in large numbers.

The local-born are usually called "Filipino-Americans" or Americans of Filipino Ancestry (AFA). This is similar to the Japanese generational pattern, in which there is a distinction between the Japan-born and those born here, who are called Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJA). The Japanese, who started arriving in Hawaii in 1885, are now into the sixth or seventh generation. Some Filipinos, by the oldest reckoning, are close to the fifth generation. Most young AFAs are third or fourth generation.

They are the ones who now go to college, who have never visited the Philippines, and who cannot speak (but can understand) any Philippine language. Roughly 90 percent trace their roots to Ilocano ancestors, and they form the bulk of those taking Ilocano language courses at the University of Hawaii, the only campus outside the Philippines to offer four levels of the language along with Filipino/Tagalog. There is now a visible group of AFAs wanting to discover their Filipino cultural identity. This can be seen in the increasing number of "study abroad" programs conducting "heritage" courses that include travel to the Philippines, usually to the students' ancestral regions.

The Hawaii Centennial was celebratory in tone but the Filipino experience in Hawaii since 1906 has many bitter dimensions, which have gone unnoticed. The early Filipinos went through much cruelty and abuse. One of their most extreme experiences was the so-called "Hanapepe Massacre" on the island of Kauai in 1924. This gruesome incident remains unsolved to this day.

That was when 16 Filipino workers in the Hanapepe plantation, believed to be Visayans, were mowed down by gunfire by special deputies who descended on their camp ostensibly to seek custody of two Ilocanos that the Visayans were reportedly holding hostage. There was tension between these two groups—the Visayans were said to have resented the Ilocanos' being hired as scabs during the 1924 plantation strike. In the ensuing melee, the 16 Visayans were shot dead as they scampered for safety. But four policemen were also among those killed. There has been no closure to this story and we may never know what actually happened. Until now, people don't even know the exact place where they were buried in a mass grave.

Also, the fact that most of the workers in the plantation area who got the death penalty were Filipinos was not something to celebrate. The death penalty was abolished in Hawaii in 1957, but only after many Filipinos, estimated to be 52 percent of those meted out the penalty during a certain period, were executed for crimes involving women.

But overall, what the centennial has done positively was to raise the awareness of the larger community on the Filipino experience in Hawaii in the past century, and to recognize the significant contributions of Filipinos in such areas as labor history, without which the state would not be what it is today.

Belinda A. Aquino, University of Hawaii at Manoa professor and director of the Center for Philippine Studies, was one of those appointed by the State of Hawaii to the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission.

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As elitist as the 'trapo' parties

I DISAGREE WITH THE INQUIRER'S editorial "An alternative." (PDI, 12/26/06) The Kapatiran Party is not true to its name. It may in fact be more similar than different in many aspects with the existing traditional Philippine political parties.

Its advocacy of requiring candidates to have a college or university degree is elitist and thus unacceptable in a genuine democracy; it will further isolate the poor and the underprivileged that Kapatiran purports to serve. That counter-democratic idea also implies that the only choice voters have is between "the dumb, uneducated celebrities" and "the educated, thinking intellectuals." Theoretically and in reality, there are also thinking, uneducated celebrities as there are dumb, "mal-educated intellectuals." Seemingly missing are educated and thinking intellectuals who are not dumb to the plight of the poor and the underprivileged.

Fernando Poe Jr. was not educated in the sense that he did not acquire a college degree, but surely he was far more thinking than the sitting President. I vividly recall an INQUIRER news item about FPJ being against globalization. And who will forget his intellectual political thesis which asserted that our people's No. 1 problem is "*altanghap*" (*almusal, tanghalian, hapunan*)? While FPJ humbly discussed socio-economic issues during the campaign, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo merely harped on FPJ's lack of college education.

Public service is not a question of having a college degree; it is a question of sincerity. You can have all the college, masteral and even doctoral degrees in the world, but these won't guarantee sincerity in serving the poor and the underprivileged. A sincere candidate is better than a corrupt one even if the latter is educated. As the Romans say, "*Corruptio optime, pessime* (The corruption of the best is the worst)." Just the same, a candidate who is both sincere and educated would be better than a candidate who's only either sincere or merely educated.

We have had enough of "educated" politicians like GMA and Jose de Venecia, so a law that would eliminate other alternatives, like the one proposed by Kapatiran would be most unwelcome. We deserve better and we cannot get better candidates by further limiting our field of choices.

Democracy is the rule of the people and it's all about who gets elected. Everybody of eligible age must be allowed to run. We should not blame the masses for voting uneducated clowns or mal-educated intellectuals. And let's not discriminate against those who failed to have college degrees because of poverty.

How will you tell the people that you care for them when you are plotting to junk their right to run for public office? Kapatiran betrays its name and it won't get the support of the masses because of its undeniable elitism.

—DAVID SAN JUAN,
dmsanjuanmm3@yahoo.com

Sabio compared to Yorac, reminded of vow

THE COCONUT FARMERS WOULD LIKE to remind Presidential Commission on Good Government Chair Camilo Sabio that he promised to resign if nothing happened to the compromise agreement on the coco levy cases by the end of 2006. His silence today is disturbing. Sabio's continuous stay in the PCGG is detrimental to the interest of the coconut farmers.

First, the current PCGG has no intention of pursuing the coco levy cases and keeps mum when asked about what alternative legal steps it has taken to hasten the execution of already resolved cases, such as those that involve UCPB and CIIF-SMC shares.

The Sandiganbayan explicitly stated in its Dec. 28, 2004 ruling that "it is high time that the real beneficiaries of the coconut levy funds, the coconut farmers who contributed to it and the entire coconut industry, be given a chance to reap the benefits that are due them."

Second, the out-of-court settlement that Sabio vigorously pursued involved the 27-percent SMC shares in a case that the Sandiganbayan has decided in favor of the government. Lastly, Sabio's compromise agreement does not contain any parameters that can be looked into; nothing has been provided and discussed by the PCGG with the farmers whom it should have represented.

Former PCGG Chair Haydee Yorac and former Solicitor General Simeon Marcelo did everything they could to move the coconut levy cases in the courts. The PCGG during Yorac's time provided all legal remedies and brainstormed with the coconut farmers, an approach that led to favorable court decisions. Sabio, on the other hand, has ignored all the court rulings, insisting that a compromise agreement is the best option. The continuous delay in the resolution of the coco levy cases is caused by this effort of the government to negotiate a political compromise with Eduardo Cojuangco.

I urge Sabio to be true to his words and resign from the PCGG. His continuous stay creates more harm than good and is an injustice to the millions of coconut farmers who bore the burden of the coco levies during martial law.

—JOEY T. FAUSTINO,
executive director, Coconut Industry
Reform (COIR) Movement Inc.,
84 Masikap Ext., Diliman, Quezon City

Illegal parking terminal now a 'magnet' for crimes

THIS IS TO RAISE A SIX-YEAR-OLD CONcern of the Roxas Seafront Garden Homeowners' Association. We believe this affects not only its almost 1,000 residents but also the entire populace of Pasay City.

Our specific concern revolves around the operation and maintenance of a parking terminal for PUJs (public utility jeepneys) and PUBs (public utility buses). The terminal occupies a stretch of public road from the corner of the Roxas Boulevard Service Road and Cuneta Avenue to Russel Street, Pasay City. We have long suspected this to be illegal. We have requested both the Office of the Mayor and the Sangguniang Panglunsod to produce the city ordinance/resolution proving the legality of the terminal, to no avail.

Also, neither suspended Mayor Peewee Trinidad nor Acting Mayor Allan Panaligan has responded to our letters where we called their attention to the problems in the area—like the killings, snatching and worsening traffic situation which all have caused anxiety and fear in the hearts of our residents. For this, we can't help but be immensely disappointed with the kind of public service and response we are getting from our local officials.

There used to be a Traffic Parking and Management Office inside this terminal but it was demolished to give way to a beautification project. But we have strong reason to believe that the collection of parking fees continues and that the collections from the operation of this illegal parking terminal are not transmitted to the Office of the City Treasurer, for obvious reasons.

Because of this terminal, the beautification of the side streets—new brick-paved sidewalks, colorful streetlights and single parking slots stretching from the sidewalk of Vito Cruz Street to the Pasay-Baclaran boundary—has become "an exercise in futility," so to speak.

If our suspicion is correct, then the officials of Pasay City who are involved must be held accountable. We hope the acting mayor of Pasay City will be bolder in addressing these irregularities and learn as well from the fate of city officials who were suspended earlier for engaging in illegal transactions.

—PETE L. ILAGAN,
president, Roxas Seafront Gardens
Homeowners' Association, Pasay City,
pete_ilagan@yahoo.com

Smells like pork barrel

I AGREE WITH JUAN MIGUEL LUZ'S VIEW of the government's School Feeding Program. (PDI, 12/25/06) The Department of Education needs more than rice to keep Grade 1-2 pupils in school. Students drop out of school not only because they don't have rice to eat or because they are undernourished.

Our public schools need more teachers, more books, more classrooms. To send their children to school, parents need jobs, not charity. A kilo of rice a day is not an assurance that the pupils will report to school every day; or that they will be fed properly. Indeed, must a child go to school to get his ration of rice, even if he is sick? Or what if a child's rice ration is sold to buy a notebook or crayon; or to serve the other needs of the family; or is converted into a "*baon*"?

The DepEd has been right all along—its budget should allow for the hiring of more teachers and building of more classrooms.

The government's School Feeding Program smells like pork barrel.

—NANCY ANNIE H. BAGAWISAN,
13 Paco, Obando, Bulacan

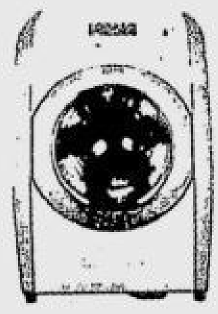
An authentic hero

UNDOUBTEDLY, JUDGE BENJAMIN POZON is a rare gem that shines brilliantly in government. What matters most to him is our national interest and sovereignty. He stood his ground unmindful of the pressure and consequences he faced because of his decision. In my estimate, not only is Pozon a true Filipino and a courageous judge; he is an authentic hero, on a far higher pedestal than any show-biz, sports, fashion or beauty celebrity deserves.

His independence of mind and bold stance make Filipinos proud and raise our dignity as a nation. Imagine going against the demand of the US government which had the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Justice, whose lapdog mentality knows no bounds. And so convicted Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith is now back in US custody. What shame and disgrace!

Fight on, Judge Pozon for justice and national identity.

—DAVID V. FELICIANO,
Adlas, Silang, Cavite



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'Jueteng' operators dangle funds to pols

LUCENA CITY—WITH ELECTIONS ONLY A FEW MONTHS AWAY, a group of gambling "brokers" allegedly under the protection of a Cabinet official, has been luring local government executives in Quezon province to call for a stop of the government-run small town lottery to pave the way for the immediate return of "jueteng," an illegal numbers game.

One of the mayors from the Bondoc Peninsula told the INQUIRER that the group had invited most of the mayors to a meeting in a classy restaurant on the outskirts of this city.

"But I will not attend [the meeting] because I'm not interested. Why would we return to jueteng? Only to be used as an election issue against us by our political opponents? The STL is enough and I think that is the general consensus among us," said the mayor, who requested anonymity.

He said the group had been dropping the name of a Cabinet official as main backer of the planned revival of jueteng, hinting that the plan had blessings from the top.

"They assured us that there was nothing to worry, that we would just collect the payola just like the old days. The offer was really tempting in the light of the coming costly election campaign. But nowadays, jueteng revival will be a vicious political issue which can ruin any political career," said the informant.

When asked if the name of Rosario Magbuhos or "Aling Charing" of San Pablo City, a suspected jueteng operator, cropped up as the financier of the group, the informant said a "new player" would be the principal operator.

Board member Isaias Ubana II said he also got wind of the report about the planned revival of jueteng as soon as the contract of Pirouette Corp., the STL franchise holder for Quezon, expires next month.

Ubana said he would denounce the plan in a privilege speech before the provincial board in its next regular session.

"We have long rejected the operation of the illegal numbers game. Definitely, we will not allow its revival. We will order the police to immediately stop any attempt to resurrect jueteng," Ubana said.

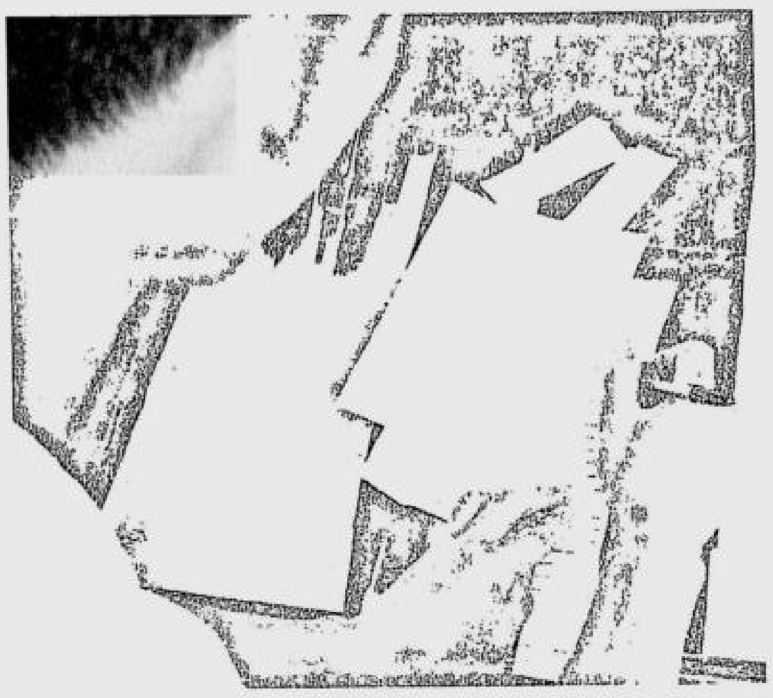
Provincial police chief Senior Supt. Victorio Caragan Jr. said he had not received any report yet on the planned revival of jueteng.

"But whatever it is, we will not allow jueteng to resume operation. First, it is illegal. Second, there's already a legal number game which now enjoys popular support, the government-run STL," Caragan said.

He said he would instruct local police chiefs to go after jueteng operators and other people involved once the illegal game resumed operations.

"There's still a standing one-strike policy. Every police chief should bear that in mind," Caragan said.

The provincial board allowed Pirouette Corp. to operate the STL through Resolution No. 2005-676 dated Oct. 3, 2005. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*



A "JUETENG" collector in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, takes time to review the previous draw's winning number combinations. FILE PHOTO

Police consult farmers, tricycle drivers, not pols, about security

BAGUIO CITY—SMARTING FROM THE failure of a 2005 peace covenant forged by detained Gov. Vicente Valera, murdered Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. and politicians in Abra, police have decided to outline peace agreements instead with farmers, tricycle drivers and ordinary folk of the province.

Cordillera police spokesperson Senior Supt. Joseph Adnol said Task Force Abra wanted to address Abra's "culture of violence" by consulting ordinary citizens, instead of their political leaders, about their province's security issues.

The feedback they would draw from a pilot consultation in Bangued, Abra on Friday would help improve the government's strategy in resolving violence in the province, Adnol said.

He said police had given themselves until March to reinforce security measures in Abra using suggestions offered by village residents.

A government fact-finding team concluded that murders in Abra were linked to political activities there, which required government intervention.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government had placed the province under national control, after a fact-finding team confirmed that local politicians had tapped some policemen and soldiers for private security duties.

The National Police Commission also removed the administrative powers Valera and Abra mayors had over the police officers assigned there.

Adnol said the police needed witnesses to testify against politicians involved in assassinations. "We have never been able to get communities there to cooperate. People there always assume that the police are there as bodyguards of their politicians and no cases are being resolved because these politicians are very influential," he said.

He said none of the Abra murder cases has been solved. "Even the high profile cases have no answers, what more the murder of a farmer who was caught in the crossfire," he said.

He said the police were frustrated that neither the national security takeover nor the peace covenant had worked.

The covenant was imposed last year by Director Jesus Versoza of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group when he was Cordillera director.

Versoza was also a member of the fact-finding team that recommended putting Abra under a special law enforcement status.

"Task Force Abra is inviting experts to join the consultations. We have the head of the firearms licensing unit. We also have prosecutors. We will lay down our cards and explain to ordinary Abra residents how police investigate cases, how these cases are prosecuted, and why we need their help," Adnol said.

"We need to assure the average Abra resident that we can change their lives but we need to find out from them how we can make that change. We can no longer impose policies on them."

"There are very good developments [in the Bersamin murder case]. We want to also share that with them," he added.

The Traffic Management Group charged Valera this week with illegal possession of firearms after his unmarked vehicle yielded seven unlicensed guns.

But the governor is yet to be indicted for Bersamin's murder after being identified by a suspect as the mastermind. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Driver of Capiz board member questioned on exec's murder

By Felipe V. Celino
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—POLICE ON FRIDAY BROUGHT in for questioning a driver of provincial board member Ronald Exmundo in connection with the Dec. 30 killing of Tapaz Vice Mayor Victor Gardose and two others.

Noel Fuentespina, 28, of Barangay Malitbog in Tapaz, was arrested by virtue of a warrant on another case but police said they also wanted to ask the driver about the killing of Gardose.

Tapaz police chief Insp. Don Ante said Fuentespina and Exmundo were both at the village hall of Barangay Taft when Gardose and his two companions were ambushed and killed several meters away.

Exmundo reportedly wanted to run for mayor of Tapaz in the May election—a post that is also being eyed by the slain vice mayor.

Ante said Fuentespina was arrested in connection with charges of murder and frustrated murder filed in the court of Lambunao, Iloilo. But he admitted that the police wanted to question him on the Gardose case.

Exmundo was invited to the coronation of a beauty queen in the barangay fiesta that Gardose was to attend, when the vice mayor was gunned down by two bonnet-wearing men as he alighted from his jeep at around 7 p.m. of Dec. 30, 2006.

Also killed were Leonardo Gimeno Sr., chair of Barangay Caridad; and Gardose's bodyguard, Anthony Gequillo.

Exmundo could have been the lone political opponent of Gardose in the May election after his cousin, three-term Mayor Romualdo Exmundo Jr., endorsed him as his successor.

Fuentespina was arrested at Exmundo's house as he and the board member were about to leave for Roxas City to attend the provincial board's first regular session for 2007.

Policemen handcuffed the driver and brought him to the Tapaz police station.

Exmundo said he did not know his driver had pending cases. He questioned the arrest of Fuentespina because his driver was always with him anywhere he went.

Exmundo said he would provide a lawyer for Fuentespina, the board member's driver of two years.

Last week, it was the policeman security detail of Mayor Exmundo, identified as PO3 Danilo Gelilang, who was held for police questioning on the Gardose killing.

Task Force Gardose considers Gelilang a suspect in the killing of Gardose, Gimeno and Gequillo.

Both Gelilang and Fuentespina are in the custody of the provincial police.

A total of P800,000 has been offered as reward to whoever could give information leading to the arrest of the killers of the vice mayor and his companions.

The Exmundo cousins have denied involvement in the attack.

Mayor Exmundo has asked the National Bureau of Investigation to help speed up the investigation, saying the incident had brought grave tension in Tapaz.

Board member Exmundo also expressed dismay over criticisms against their family. On Friday, he delivered a privilege speech denying any part in the ambush.

"Everybody was in a frenzy condemning me; shouting to high heavens that I be delivered to the devil instead, opening the floodgates of retribution to me and my family. It is sad how people can be so cruel, but worse is to condemn an innocent man for the sins of others," he said in his speech.

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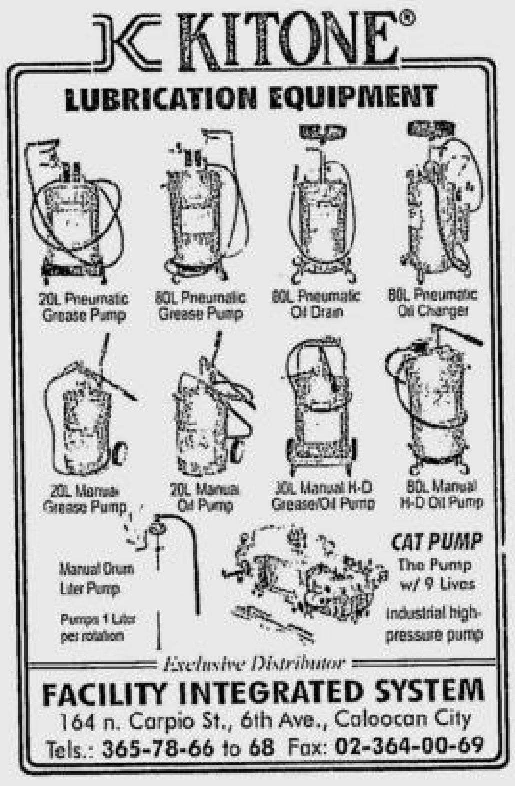

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SMART COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

Coal-fired plant in Misamis starts operations

By Grace Albasin
Inquirer Mindanao

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—THE CONTROVERSIAL 210-megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant in Misamis Oriental formally operates today with President Macapagal-Arroyo leading the inauguration rites.

The $305-million power plant, built by German power firm STEAG, sits on a 55.42-hectare property inside the Phividec Industrial Estate in Villanueva town.

Ms Arroyo will be accompanied by Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla and German Ambassador Axel Weishaupt.

STEAG officials said the plant would provide 15 percent of Mindanao's total power demand, estimated at more than 200 MW.

"The project brings an optimistic outlook for the economy of 2007 as it answers the call of the President to use alternative fuel and responds to the government's campaign for investments in electric power energy," Jerome Soldevilla, STEAG Communications officer, said.

But militant groups maintained that the operation of the plant, which will be fed by Indonesian coal, was unnecessary and would harm the environment.

Ben Cyrus Ellorin, spokesperson of the local environmental group Task Force Macajalar, said data from the Department of Energy shows that Mindanao would have enough electricity until 2012 even if no new generation plant was built.

Ellorin said the DOE had estimated that Mindanao's combined power plants last year were producing an excess of more than 300 MW.

The operation of the power plant would further threaten the environment even if STEAG used state-of-the-art antipollution devices, he added.

Antipollution devices

He said STEAG has been boosting about its antipollution devices but was silent on the issue of green house gas emissions.

"Trace chemicals like mercury, chromium and lead cannot be completely removed by antipollution devices. Basically their flue gas desulphurization and bag filters or electrostatic precipitators are just good at preventing acid rain-causing gases like sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides, but their fly ash will still end up in the environment," Ellorin said.

Soldevilla said STEAG had adopted many measures to ensure the safety of the environment and health of the people living near the plant.

Measures

He said ash by-product disposal facilities, coal handling plant, water treatment facilities, oil storage facility, fire fighting station, transmission line and raw water river intake and pipeline had been installed so that the plant's operations would have low impact on the environment.

Soldevilla said the operation would also be closely monitored by the Environmental Management Bureau.

STEAG, he said, had put up P30 million in funds for environmental preservation projects and social development programs.

Ellorin said his group, which has been protesting the coal-fired facility since 2003, would monitor plant operations for adherence to environmental laws.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's daughter Luli looks at the computerized monitoring of emissions from the coal-fired power plant inside the control room during a visit last December. At her left is Andreas Rubin, president of the power firm STEAG State Power Inc.
GRACE CANTAL-ALBASIN/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Church urges Guimaras folk to reject oil spill deal

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE ARCHDIOCESE OF Jaro has called on Guimaras residents affected by the oil spill to reject a settlement agreement that waives their right to damage claims in the future.

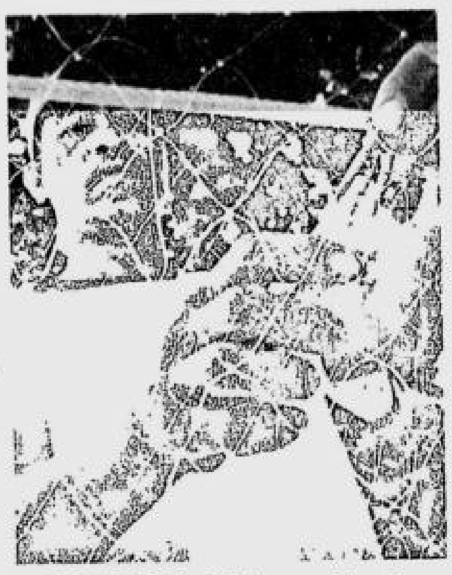
In a press conference on Thursday, Msgr. Meliton Oso, director of the Jaro Archdiocese Social Action Center, also called on Petron Corp. and insurance firms to pay "just compensation" to the residents.

Oso said the residents were being paid a "pittance for the surrender of their rights" to seek "just compensation" from Petron and the insurance firms.

The archdiocese has tapped the assistance of the Sapalo and Velez Law Offices to help the people seek higher compensation.

The International Oil Pollution Compensation (IOPC) Fund has started paying residents affected by the oil spill compensation, ranging from P3,000 to P32,000. The IOPC is a London-based intergovernmental agency that indemnifies losses resulting from oil spills.

Around 13,000 residents have filed claims for economic losses arising from the oil spill after the MT Solar I sank in stormy seas off Guimaras on Aug. 11, 2006.



A FISHERMAN of Guiwanon island in Barangay Cabalagnan, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras, one of the areas badly hit by an oil spill last year, prepares for going back to sea. Around 200 sacks of bunker fuel debris were still in the island last December.
ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

The tanker, which was transporting more than 2.1 million liters of bunker fuel oil for Petron from Bataan to Zamboanga, spilled over 300,000 liters of its fuel load, coating coastal areas with oil sludge.

Nearly half of the claimants from the five municipalities of Guimaras have already received payments. The IOPC aims to complete the payments next month.

In an earlier interview, IOPC deputy director Joe Nichols said the compensation was derived from claims of losses and the average income of claimants before the oil spill.

Retired Judge David Alfeche Jr. said the one-page agreement signed by the claimants upon receipt of checks from the IOPC was "disadvantageous" to them.

He cited the provision that states that claimants "irrevocably" waive their rights for further court claims from the owners of Solar I related to oil spill damage.

Alfeche said this would bar the residents from seeking future claims in case of another oil spill from the wreck.

"The Solar I is still there and there is a possibility, even if remote, that oil spills could happen because the bulk of 2.1 million liters of bunker fuel is still inside it," Alfeche said in the press conference.

Many of the affected fisherfolk could have been unaware of the implication of the agreement in their desire to receive the compensation, said Alfeche.

He said communities affected by the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989 were still receiving payments up to now and had even increased their claims.

But Plaridel Nava II, Guimaras provincial legal officer who notarized the signed agreements, refuted Alfeche.

"They (residents) can still claim for damages if another oil spill from Solar I happens," said Nava.

At least 234 residents of the island-village of Guiwanon in Nueva Valencia town have signed a statement refusing to approve the final settlement agreement.

Alfeche said he would assist the residents who had not signed the agreement and had not received any compensation to ask for higher compensation from the IOPC.

But he said it would be difficult for those who had already been paid and had signed the agreement because they would require a nullification of the document.

He said litigation would take a long time and would be very expensive because it would be against the IOPC and Petron.

Oso said the archdiocese was backing the residents' demand for compensation and the immediate removal of the wreck from the waters of Guimaras.

The archdiocese will also call for a boycott of Petron products until the affected areas are completely cleaned up and the residents compensated.

He said churches in the 92 parishes under the archdiocese would hang streamers calling for the boycott.

Petron spokesperson Carlos Tan said the move would be "unproductive." He earlier said it would not hasten the cleanup and the payment for damages.

ROUNDUP

Securing Central Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Police in Central Mindanao are mapping out security measures to prevent political killings in the region. The first victim of politics-related killing in the region was Mayor George Yabes of Maitum town in Sarangani. Three motorcycle-riding men shot and killed Yabes while he was inspecting government projects in his town on Nov. 11. Regional police director Chief Supt. German Doria told reporters that police were still trying to determine the brains behind the killing. Doria said he would strictly implement the election gun ban.

Aquiles Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao

New Bicol police chief

LEGAZPI CITY—Chief Supt. Ricardo I. Padilla has assumed the post of director of the Philippine National Police in Bicol, succeeding Chief Supt. Victor B. Boco, who will be retiring this month after 35 years of service. PNP Director General Oscar C. Calderon was guest speaker during the turnover of command. Padilla used to be Calderon's chief of staff when he was still regional director in Calabarzon. He once headed the 244th Company of the defunct Philippine Constabulary based in Camarines Sur. The new PNP Bicol director appealed for cooperation from his men and the Bicolano community.

Inquirer Southern Luzon

Suspected robber slain

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—A suspected leader of the notorious "Akyat Bahay" gang was killed in a shootout with police in Tanauan City on Dec. 30. Tanauan police chief Supt. Francisco Rodriguez said Jesus Cabaluna, 35, a native of Buenavista in Bohol, was killed while his still unidentified companion escaped. Rodriguez said Barangay Gonzales officials went to their office at around 6 a.m. to seek police assistance about the break-in in one of the houses in the barangay. He said village officials had received several complaints from residents who were victimized by the "Akyat Bahay" gang. Cabaluna, he added, had been identified by the residents as the leader of the robbery gang.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

2 killed in front of chapel

CABUYAO, Laguna—Two bonnet-wearing men on board a motorcycle gunned down two men and wounded another in front of a chapel in Barangay 2 here on Jan. 4. Cabuyao police chief Supt. Bernin Banalo identified the slain victims as Carl-ann Cedillo, 27, and Hubert Maraña, 28, both of Barangay 2. Wounded was Benjie Baraquel, 27, of Barangay Marinig. Banalo said the victims were talking with each other in front of the Iglesia Ni Cristo chapel at around 3 a.m. when the assailants arrived, shot them and fled. Cedillo died on the spot while Maraña died at a local hospital. He said the two suffered at least nine bullet wounds in different parts of their bodies. Banalo said investigators were looking into the illegal drugs trade as motive for the killings.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Guard kills suspected robber

CABANATUAN CITY—A security guard shot and killed on Wednesday a suspected bank robber in Gapan City. Police said the suspect, Graciano Tolentino, 26, entered the Bank of the Philippine Islands branch in Barangay San Vicente at about 9:45 a.m. As he approached a bank teller, Tolentino announced a holdup and demanded money. The bank guard, Demetrio Santor, however, sensed that something was wrong and approached Tolentino. Santor then struck Tolentino with the butt of his gun. Tolentino, police said, tried to grab Santor's gun, forcing the guard to shoot him.

Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon

P2M lost in holdup

CAMP TOLENTINO, Bataan—Five armed men held up employees of a local bank on Tuesday and took away at least P2.3 million that they were transporting to Orani town. Police said Rolando de la Peña and Mila Ongkingko, credit investigation appraiser and cashier, respectively, of the Bataan Development Bank, were on board the bank's Toyota Innova when they were blocked by at least five armed men in Barangay Centro Unor in Orani. The employees were to transfer the money from BDB branches in Dinalupihan and Orani towns when they were held up.

Greg Refraccion, Inquirer Central Luzon

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RP loss, US gain ...

From page A1

not well paid, and so he boarded a plane to America.

To make more money. To become ... a nurse.

It hasn't worked out quite as he expected. Life in New York has proved exhausting and full of unforeseen pitfalls. And back home, many of his countrymen still find his choice difficult to accept, because the parable of Elmer Jacinto raises grim doubts about their future.

"Jacinto encapsulates perfectly the country's fundamental question today," a newspaper columnist opined. "Namely, why should anyone want to stay in it?"

Basilan roots

On the Philippine island of Basilan, electricity is a sometimes event. Telephone lines deposit calls at dead-ends. Both are blamed on the Abu Sayyaf, a Moro bandit group with an outsized reputation for violence.

So when Jacinto graduated high school there, eight years ago, he and his father set aside talk of dreams to examine reality.

"There is money in nursing," the older man counseled.

Jacinto graduated first in his nursing class, and found work at the local hospital before leaving for a better-paying job in the city. In hindsight, the move seemed fated. Not long after, Abu Sayyaf bandits stormed the hospital, taking nurses as hostages. One of Jacinto's former coworkers was killed during a shootout with soldiers.

But in Manila, Jacinto pushed ahead. He enrolled in medical school, rose to the top of his class, then joined 1,800 other aspiring doctors to take the national medical exam.

When the scores were released, Jacinto was the No. 1 young doctor in the nation.

Jacinto, though, was already making other plans. In a world where jobs and workers are shifted back and forth across borders like game pieces, he would play his hand—setting aside the goal of becoming a neurologist to work as a nurse in America for far greater pay.

Not surprising

His choice should not have been a surprise. Nearly a million Filipinos take jobs abroad each year. But now the Philippines was bleeding doctors.

"Before, we just branded it as a brain drain. But I label it now as a brain hemorrhage," says Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, a former secretary of health.

Tan estimates that in the last five years, 9,000 Filipino doctors—out of about 56,000—have retrained as nurses, and 5,000 have gone abroad. Some rural hospitals have few, if any, doctors and nurses, and care suffers.

Money is a major factor. A nurse in the Philippines makes $150-$250 a month; doctors make $300-$800. But the average registered nurse in America earns $4,000 a month.

The decision, though, remains intensely personal, and as an issue, it had generated limited attention—that is, until Jacinto set out to explain himself to a nation of 84 million people.

2-way process

In early 2004, Jacinto quietly began telling others of his plans.

"Even before he announced his decision, we already felt it was coming," says Dr. Reynaldo Olazo, dean of medicine at Fatima College. "It was I who brought it up because I could see his embarrassed smile."

Jacinto acknowledges wanting to draw attention to the shaky economic status of health care workers as an issue policymakers had too long ignored.

"Patriotism is a two-way process," he recalls thinking. "It's not only you as a citizen. It's also about the government that should also give you work, or something for yourself, to be able to live a dignified life."

His decision struck a nerve—and it was raw.

Jacinto's story "was like a slap in the face," Tan says. "Even ordinary people that I would meet, it was like, 'Hey, what has happened to our country?'"

"Deplorable ambition," one newspaper proclaimed.

Soon, Jacinto's private decision was public property.

"We cannot begrudge you, but only appeal to you to stay," Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said in a speech to Jacinto and nearly 950 other new doctors.

Doctor's covenant

A fellow doctor, Willie Ong, got to thinking. He wrote a "doctor's covenant," then convinced 1,800 physicians to sign it, pledging to remain in the country for three years.

But another 2,200 turned him down.

So last year, Ong started the Movement of Idealistic and Nationalistic Doctors (MIND), campaigning at medical schools to convince doctors to stay even before they become doctors.

Filipino lawmakers, too, found their way to the issue. They've proposed requiring all new nurses to serve in the Philippines for two to three years before being allowed to work overseas.

The question now is whether US lawmakers will speed up the exodus.

When the US Senate approved an immigration overhaul last summer, it included a measure allowing an unlimited number of foreign nurses to enter the country. If that change becomes law, "the Philippine health care system will bleed to death," Tan says.

By the time US lawmakers had taken up the issue, though, Jacinto had already arrived.

Exciting but alien

On a Friday night in November 2005, a China Airlines jet touched down at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. Twenty newly minted nurses walked down the gangway, and a recruiter stepped forward to meet them.

Jacinto and seven others were sent to Avalon Gardens, a nursing home in Smithtown, New York, about 80 kilometers from Manhattan.

For Jacinto, this new world was exciting, but alien.

The air was sharp, the ground was brittle. He and his roommates were the only people who seemed to walk anywhere in a land where most everyone moved by car.

But the jarring adjustment was minor compared with problems that over time became increasingly troubling, he and other nurses allege. Their account is strongly disputed by the nursing home operator and its sister recruitment agency.

The new employer, which had promised two months free housing, assigned eight nurses to a small, dingy home—a tight fit with three bedrooms and a single bathroom that did not always work. Jacinto and another man slept on pullout couches in the living room.

The home—a one-story bungalow large enough for a small family—still houses newly arrived nurses and their families.

Rat across driveway

On a recent visit by a reporter, the bungalow housed eight people, including three children, after two nurses had moved out. The kitchen sink was clogged shut and was draining out the window. Lights in the kitchen did not work. A rat scurried across the driveway.

After a few weeks of doing clerical work, Jacinto and the other nurses say they were assigned to nursing duties but paid less than promised. Some say they were shortchanged in other ways, not being paid for night work or given promised insurance.

By spring, they'd had enough. Their employer, who contends the nurses were always treated fairly, says many walked out without notice, endangering patients requiring constant care.

What's clear is that on April 7, Jacinto and 10 others quit. In all, 26 nurses left, including five trained as doctors.

Not even five months had passed since Jacinto, briefly the most famous doctor in the Philippines, had arrived in the United States. Now he was anonymous—and out of a job.

Back on front page

Last fall, Jacinto's face returned to front pages at home, the central character in a revised morality tale about a trap set by naive expectations.

Jacinto and the other nurses are out of work and running out of money, Filipino newspaper readers were told. Worse, they are living in abandoned, leaking houses, at the end of dark city alleys, according to the stories.

"They have found out for themselves that the honeyed words they had relied upon were laced with large doses of bitter circumstances when they disembarked on the shores of the promised land," Pimentel said in a speech before the Philippine Senate.

But Jacinto, himself, is missing from the discussion, grown weary of explaining himself.

On a recent afternoon, he leads the way through New York's Elmhurst neighborhood to a table at the Fay Dah Chinese bakery, where one counter serves bubble tea and another advertises international money transfers.

A place for himself

"I feel I belong here," he says. "Look, Asians. Lots of Asians."

It took just weeks for the nurses to find work, thanks to an insatiable health care labor market. He and three others have settled into a spare, but spotless walk-up apartment. Once a month, he walks to the bakery and wires $500 to his parents back in Basilan.

The past year has been so tiring, he talks of remaining a nurse rather than trying to become a doctor in the United States.

JACINTO at work at the St. Vincent's Midtown Hospital in New York. AP

Still, Jacinto says he is finding a place for himself—and a sense of peace.

Back home, the expectation is "that you should become the model Filipino, doing it for your country. I want something for myself," Jacinto says. "I want to move on."

He knows that some in his homeland still judge him.

Well, he says, let them talk. *AP*

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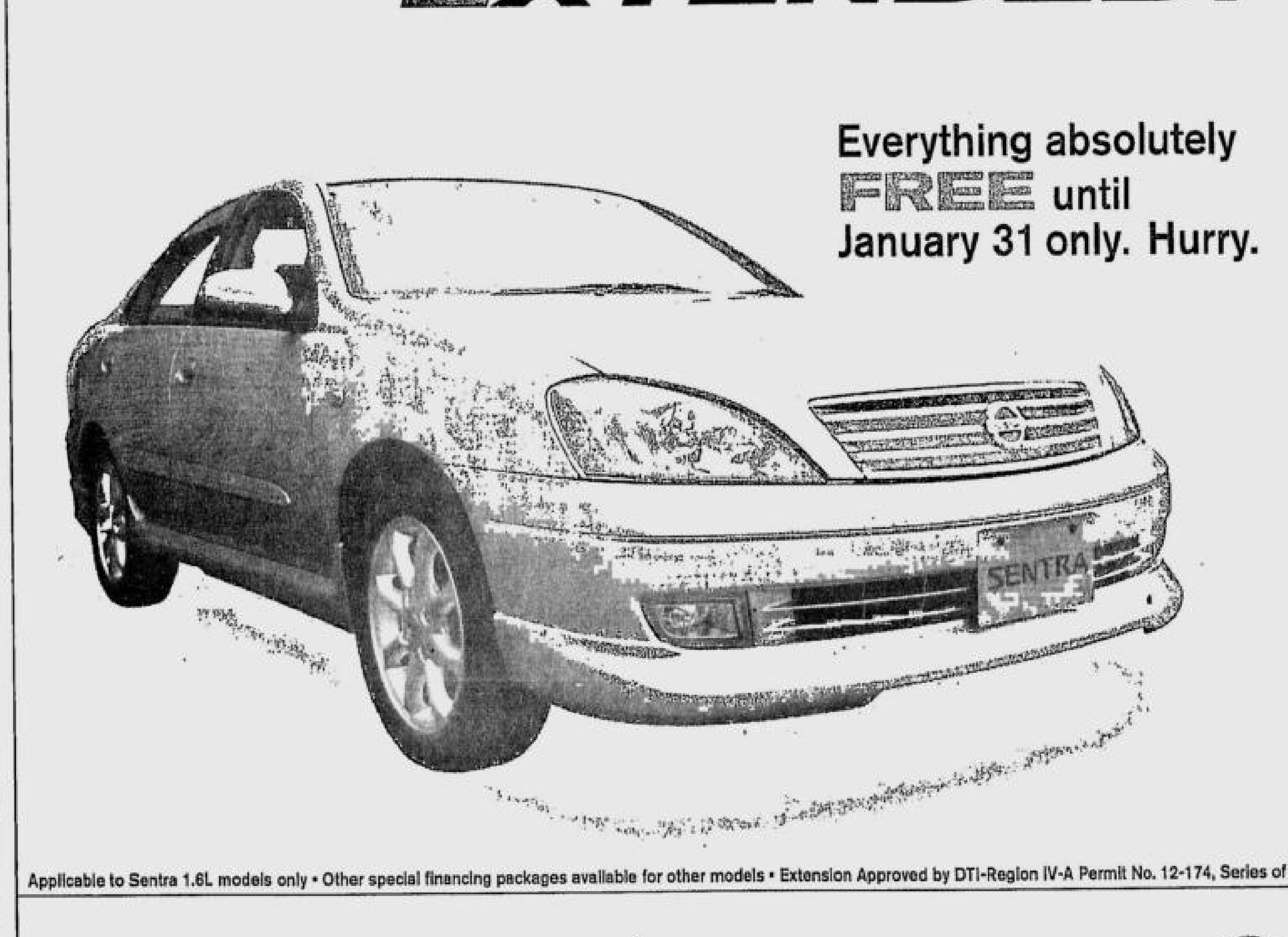

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COCA-COLA'S Ali Peek (right) battles Sta. Lucia's Norman Gonzales for ball possession.
AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Express stay alive; Realtors triumph

By Musong R. Castillo

Games Wednesday (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:35 p.m.—Alaska vs Sta. Lucia
7:20 p.m.—Air21 vs Coca-Cola

AIR21 GOT ITS RUNNING game going late in the third quarter and the Express nipped the Alaska Aces, 112-106, last night to remain in contention for the last quarterfinal berth of the Talk 'N Text PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Express trailed by as many as 11 points in the first half then ran roughshod over the Aces to stay on track to a potential playoff clash with the Sta. Lucia Realtors.

The Realtors earlier snapped out of a four-game losing streak with a masterful 122-75 victory over Coca-Cola that eliminated the Tigers.

Sta. Lucia could have gained the quarterfinal berth outright with an Alaska win over Air21 in the second game.

But Egay Billones, a third-string guard who came into the game averaging less than a point an outing, erupted for all of his 16 points in the final two periods to energize the Express and keep them alive.

Gary David also tossed in 32 markers as Air21 clawed back from several double-digit deficits to move up to 2-0 in the wild card and go into the final day of this phase on Wednesday with the chance to sweep.

"It was not planned. It was a spur-of-the-moment thing," Air21 coach Bo Perasol said, referring to Billones. "I don't know where he got his confidence. But I have to give it to him for stepping up and playing the way he did."

Billones hit 3-of-4 three-pointers in a torrid third quarter fightback to put the Express within striking distance.

An 11-0 run at the halfway point of the fourth turned a 98-97 deficit to a 108-98 lead, with Billones highlighting the spurt by finishing consecutive fastbreak plays with jumpers off the glass.

Kelly Williams, with a bad back and all, paced the Realtors with 22 points and nine rebounds, and Kenneth Duremdes backed him up with 19, including 14 in the third period when the Realtors totally took the fight out of the game Tigers.

At 11-9 overall and 1-1 for the wildcard, Sta. Lucia could still be dragged into a playoff for the natural No. 6 berth in the quarterfinals assuming that the Express win against Coca-Cola on Wednesday.

Air21 would then be availing of the wild card incentive of a sweep, which will entitle the team to a playoff.

"This game is more important to me in the sense that we got back on track," Sta. Lucia coach Alfrancis Chua said.

The scores:

First Game

STA. LUCIA 122—Williams 21, Duremdes 19, Mendoza 17, Catli 11, Calimag 11, Espino 9, Omolon 8, Gonzales 8, Bughao 7, Cabagnot 7, Aquino 4, Isip 0.

COCA-COLA 75—Arigo 22, Miranda 15, Caceres 13, Pacana 7, Peek 7, Misolas 5, Yeo 4, Salangsang 2, Gavino 0, Ramos 0, Ferreria 0.

Quarters: 28-15, 58-34, 91-50, 122-75.

Second Game

AIR21 112—David 32, De Ocampo 17, Billones 16, Telan 14, Canaleta 13, Arboleda 10, Sotto 6, Santos 4, Andaya 0, Dimaunahan 0, Bernardo 0.

ALASKA 106—Cariaso 19, Ferriols 18, Miller 14, Dela Cruz 12, Laure 10, Thoss 9, Hugnatan 9, Singson 4, Bajar 4, Aban 3, Juinio 2, Belasco 2.

Quarters: 19-29, 51-58, 84-88, 112-106.

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5 kids trapped in burning house killed

By DJ Yap

FIVE SIBLINGS—WITH AGES RANGING from 3 to 10—were killed when they were trapped inside their burning house in a depressed area in Malinta, Valenzuela City before dawn yesterday.

Killed were Bibeth Vebita, 10; and her siblings Rita, 8; Henesy, 7; May-May, 5 and Harold Jr., 3, based on initial reports.

The eldest of the brood, 12-year-old Herald, survived the incident but sustained burns in his arms. He was taken to the Valenzuela General Hospital for treatment.

The three-hour fire destroyed an estimated P3 million worth of property and displaced some 100 families, according to a report by arson investigator FO3 Fidelito Miñeve.

Investigation showed that the blaze began in the victims' two-story house on Carnation Street. Their parents, Harold and Maritess, had left the children very early in the morning to go to the market.

At 2:10 a.m., a fire started in the kitchen, probably caused by a lit candle since power was out in the area at the time. It then spread to the rest of the house which was made of light materials, Miñeve said.

The victims were trapped in the burning house and neighbors were unable to get them out because the door had been padlocked to keep out burglars, investigators added.

Herald, however, managed to jump out from a window on the second floor, Miñeve said.

The fire reached the fifth alarm and was put out at 5:26 a.m. but not before it had spread to 80 other houses in the area, officials said.

ACCOMPANIED by his dog, Jon Paul Mopon, 11, looks for anything worth salvaging from the site where his house used to stand. A fire hit a depressed area in Malinta, Valenzuela City yesterday, killing five children. RAFFY LERMA

Cops arrest suspect in mall robbery

By Nancy C. Carvajal

AN OFFICIAL OF THE QUEZON CITY POLICE District has confirmed the arrest of a suspect in the robbery of the Ever Gotesco mall on Commonwealth Avenue which took place on Christmas Day.

Supt. Bernabe Balba, QCPD intelligence chief, told the INQUIRER in a phone interview the other day that the suspect, Danny Abanag, 31, was arrested after a mall security guard identified him as one of the armed men who held up the department store.

The robbers, who were armed and dressed in Special Weapons and Tactics uniforms, barged into the mall at around 1 a.m. on Dec. 25 and told security guards that they were responding to a threat within the building. They then hogtied the guards, broke into the treasury office on the second floor and carted away millions of pesos.

"He is a member of the Alvin Flores group, a known robbery gang," Balba said of Abanag.

He added that the suspect was arrested on Dec. 27, the same day his wife complained to the police that several armed men had taken him from their house in Sitio Puting Bato in North Bay Boulevard South, Navotas.

Abanag was charged with robbery in band and is now being held at the detention cell of the Criminal Investigation Unit in Camp Caringal, Quezon City.

DID YOU KNOW

THE MAIN building of the US Embassy on Roxas Boulevard, Manila opened in 1940 as the office and residence of US High Commissioner in the Philippines Francis B. Sayre. When the Japanese occupied the country, it turned the building into its embassy. After the compound was liberated by US forces in 1945, its ballroom became a courthouse for war crime trials. On July 4, 1946, the building became the chancery of the US Embassy.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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Raffle offers audience with Pope

By Christian V. Esguerra

TO MARK THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY of the Black Nazarene, 400 miniature replicas of the image of Jesus Christ from Mexico have been sculpted by woodcarvers from Paete, Laguna.

The sculptures, collectively called the "Nazareno 400," are now being sold at P20,000 each.

Aside from having your own miniature version of the Black Nazarene, however, buying any of the 400 collector's item statues gives you a shot at an even bigger prize: A chance to meet Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican.

St. John de Baptist Church in Quiapo, Manila will be holding a raffle for devotees who will purchase any of the 400 images called "Kapatid."

One of those who has already placed an order for the replica is Vice President Noli de Castro, a devotee.

Each of the miniature images is clad in fabric cut from the dress actually worn by the Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno.

The raffle will be held before June 1, which marks the end of the Black Nazarene's Jubilee Year.

Proceeds from the sale will go to the different projects of the church which has been the image's home since its transfer from a church of Recollect friars in Intramuros on Jan. 9, 1767.

The transfer, called "traslacion," is what is commemorated every Jan. 9, not the feast of the parish patron saint which falls on June 24.

Considered miraculous by devotees, the image of the Black Nazarene arrived in Manila on board a ship in 1607. A fire that hit the ship partly burned the image, giving it its charcoal color.

Msgr. Josefino Ramirez, Quiapo parish priest, said its color actually helped Filipinos identify themselves with Christ who is also depicted bearing a heavy cross.

"To many devotees, he is the Filipino version of Jesus Christ," he told the INQUIRER in an earlier interview.

This year, the "traslacion," which is usually done around the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene (the church's other name), will cover more ground.

A motorcade at 5:30 p.m. today will bring the image to Rizal Park where it will be welcomed by a 10-minute fireworks display. It will be followed by a candlelight ceremony to be led by Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

A series of spiritual activities, including penitential services by bishops and priests, confessions, veneration of the Black Nazarene, and an overnight vigil, will follow. At 6 a.m. tomorrow, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales will lead a High Mass.

A procession which will begin at noon will bring the Black Nazarene back to the Quiapo Church.

More jeepney drivers switching to biofuel

By DJ Yap

ON A HUMID FRIDAY AFTERNOON in the heart of Quezon City, a jeepney driver named Ramon pulls into a refueling station, mumbling his apologies to a handful of weary passengers.

He tells the attendant: "One hundred pesos *lang muna, brod. Wala bang* discount?" Sorry, sir, the uniformed young man replies, no discounts at the moment.

Ramon looks on as the nozzle pumps a biodiesel blend into the gas tank. Seconds later, he maneuvers the rumbling vehicle back on the street to greet the rush hour traffic. Behind him, a jeepney lets out a friendly beep and slides into the space he just left.

The scene might well have taken place in any gasoline station anywhere else in the country—except for the part about the biodiesel.

Since its launch in December, the Flying V Biofuel Center in Philcoa, the first of its kind in the country, has found a regular patron in Ramon and many of his fellow drivers plying the city's busy streets.

"They (jeepney drivers) comprise about half of our customers. The other half are people from the upper and middle class who drive sports utility vehicles," the manager Cezar Tanjutco said.

"We didn't expect biodiesel to catch on with jeepney drivers so quickly," he told the INQUIRER.

After all, the jeepney, a remnant of World War II era, is a mode of public transport no one associates with Earth-friendly practices, with its reputation as the noisy, smoke-belching kings of Metro Manila streets.

But on any given day, one can see jeepneys lining up at the Biofuel Center fronting the Elliptical Circle, located strategically just several meters away from a station of oil giant Petron on Commonwealth Avenue.

"I guess they can see the benefits of using biodiesel instead of regular diesel," Tanjutco said.

The Biofuel Center is a venture of Flying V, one of the smaller petroleum companies in the country, in collaboration with the Philippine Coconut Authority, which owns the property where the facility is located.

It offers various environment-friendly fuels, such as pre-blended coco-methyl ester (CME) or coco-biodiesel, under the brand name Envirotek Bio-Diesel Premium, for diesel engines.

(Diesel is mixed with only one percent of CME in the ready made product. But motorists may opt for a higher concentration by adding two to three liters of Envirotek to the blend, Tanjutco said.)

The center also dispenses fuel ethanol for gasoline-run vehicles.

After two months of operations, the center has begun to attract regular customers, Tanjutco said.

"On the average, we sell between 5,000 and 6,000 liters a day," he said.

"We're happy with the sales, but we're expecting more. Some of our competitors in Fairview who don't offer biodiesel have dropped their prices drastically, which affects us," Tanjutco added.

He said management was now trying to attract more patrons by calling attention to the benefits of alternative fuels like biodiesel, not only to the environment but also to fuel economy.

"With biodiesel, you get more mileage ... If the engine is new, and the driver is careful, the one-percent biodiesel blend can give you up to 25 percent more compared to ordinary diesel," Tanjutco said.

"And even if the engine is old, and the driver is careless, you still can get 10 percent more mileage with biodiesel," he added.

Ramon attested to this.

"I notice that my trips to the gasoline station for a refill have become less frequent. Maybe it has something to do with the biodiesel," he said in a recent chat with the INQUIRER.

Ramon has been driving a jeepney for almost three years now but he began using biodiesel only three weeks ago on the advice of a fellow driver.

"He said I would be able to save on gas if I switched to biodiesel. Naturally, I wanted to try it," he said in Filipino.

More than the advantage in terms of mileage, a positive change in the quality of exhaust fumes emitted by biodiesel-run vehicles often occurs.

"In most cases, the smoke looks whiter and lighter, unlike dark fumes that used to be emitted when they were still using regular diesel," Tanjutco said.

Some regular patrons even ask for heavier concentrations of the Envirotek in their fuel, Tanjutco said. "In such cases, they tell me the smoke begins to smell like French fries."

Tanjutco said there should be a greater effort to convince more Filipinos like Ramon to switch to alternative fuels. He said: "There are two very simple but good reasons: It saves on gas and it's Earth-friendly."

BIOFUEL CENTER

THE BIOFUEL Center in Philcoa, Quezon City (left) has become a favorite fueling station of jeepney drivers looking for more mileage for their money.

PHOTOS BY JOAN BONDOC

METRO
Citizen's call
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PROMPT ACTION

In response to a text message sent to Citizen's Call by INQUIRER reader Joel about a clogged estero in Manila, Mayor Lito Atienza ordered the clean-up of the waterway located near the corner of C.M. Recto and Jose Abad Santos. The photo of the garbage-filled Estero de Magdalena appeared in the INQUIRER's Metro section on Jan. 1. The clean-up operation was conducted last week and was led by Manila Inner City Development chair Ali Atienza (left, holding bamboo pole) and city engineer Armand Andres.

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IN OUR SUBDIVISION, New Capitol Estates 2, stray dogs roam freely. The association is not doing anything about it. Please help us in reporting this to the proper authorities. Thank you.

—CARLO QUIAOIT, 35, Quezon City

Attention MWSI, the quality of water supply in our barangay—E. Remigio Street in Sta. Cruz, Manila—is so turbid and smelly. I think MWSI should defer the collection of payments for November and December because the water is totally useless. *Panglinis lang ng toilet.* It can't be used for cooking because you will get diarrhea.

—ARLENE GO, Sta. Cruz, Manila

A poor road in one barangay is tolerable but an entire stretch, including a national road, makes me wonder if local officials have been elected from those places. Maybe, they don't live there that's why they don't notice it. I am not from there but I am concerned about the motorists and residents in those places.

—ATTY. MARISSA ORPILLA, 34, Tandang Sora, Quezon City

Watch your car boys along Legaspi corner Paseo de Roxas in Makati are forcing car owners to pay them.

—JOEY REYES, 50, Makati

Cops nab 9 motorbike drag racers

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THEY WERE NOT FAST ENOUGH.

Nine suspected motorcycle drag racers were arrested early yesterday while they were speeding on a national highway in Taytay, Rizal.

But six others managed to flee and elude arrest, Rizal police director Supt. Freddie Panen said.

Responding to complaints from residents, the provincial police went to the area at about 3 a.m. yesterday and chanced upon the group on Ortigas Avenue Extension.

Motorcycle drag racing has been a consistent problem in the area. Two months ago, a man was killed after he was ran over by one of the racers, Panen said.

It was not yet clear if only one group has been holding drag races in the area or if those arrested yesterday were members of just one of several groups.

The race usually covers 12 kilometers of the highway. The racers usually start on side streets before picking up speed on the national highway, Panen said.

Big bets are allegedly involved in the race. Most of the participants own very expensive motorcycles.

"These racers not only generate noise and disturb people sleeping at night. They also endanger the lives of residents," Panen told the INQUIRER.

He noted that some of those arrested were "English-speaking" and looked like they came from affluent families.

Police confiscated the suspects' nine motorcycles and also came upon six abandoned motorcycles, leading investigators to believe some of the racers managed to flee.

Panen identified those arrested as Jeric Guevarra, 33; Luisito Napiza, 29; Ligin Cruz, 22; Patrick John Ragudo, 21; Mark Paul San Pascual, 19; Leo Santos, 20; Christopher Lugtu, 24; Jervy Lorenzo, 22 and Jam del Rosario, 21.

Ragudo lives in nearby Cainta while the rest are residents of Taytay.

Police will file charges of reckless driving, alarm and scandal and disobedience to a person of authority against the suspects.

Traffic jams blamed on fireworks show

By Tarra V. Quismundo

WHAT DO FIREWORKS HAVE TO DO with traffic?

A lot, if you ask the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA). An official yesterday blamed the ongoing World Pyro Olympics in Pasay City for the huge traffic jams in Roxas Boulevard and Edsa over the weekend.

According to Angelito Vergel de Dios, MMDA Traffic Operations Center chief, vehicular flow on the two major thoroughfares crawled at a snail's pace as motorists stopped or drove slowly to view the fireworks display that lit up the skies over Manila Bay on Friday and Saturday.

"Once the show starts, motorists would stop even if they were on a flyover because you can really see the fireworks from Roxas Boulevard. If the show runs for an hour, traffic would be on a standstill for an hour," Vergel de Dios told the INQUIRER.

Vergel de Dios said the fireworks competition, staged by the Makati-based La Mancha Pyro Productions at the Esplanade of the Mall of Asia complex in Pasay City on Friday and Saturday, halted traffic on Roxas Boulevard and Edsa from 6 p.m. until past midnight.

On Saturday, the buildup on Edsa's southbound side—which stretched from Edsa Extension, Pasay City to Cubao, Quezon City—kept MMDA traffic enforcers on the road until 2 a.m.

Adding to the traffic jams were sectional repairs being undertaken by the MMDA along Edsa. According to the agency, the roadwork, which resumed only last week following a break during the holiday season, would be conducted every weekend until February.

Vergel de Dios said the organizer of the pyrotechnics show should have coordinated with the MMDA to avoid disrupting traffic in the area.

Reached for comment, Roberto Crisostomo, the event organizer, told the INQUIRER that the production team coordinated with the mall administration and Pasay City policemen and traffic officers. Both Edsa and Roxas Boulevard, however, are under the jurisdiction of the MMDA, being national roads.

The show had its first weekend run from Jan. 5 to Jan. 7, with two 20-minute fireworks displays nightly, the first at 8 p.m. and another at 9:15 p.m. Another run is set on Jan. 12 and 13.

Short of covering the skies, the MMDA was hard pressed to come up with a solution to the problem. One proposal was to hold the event later at night, after rush hour.

But Crisostomo thumbed down the suggestion. "It's a family activity so if you hold it at 10 p.m. or 11 p.m., families won't be able to watch it," he said.

Vergel de Dios, meanwhile, came up with a more practical solution: Deploy more traffic enforcers.

QC has new sanitation code

By DJ Yap

QUEZON CITY IS POISED TO IMPLEMENT new policies on hygiene in such areas as water refilling or delivery and animal waste disposal with the passage of its modified Sanitation Code.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. has signed into law the ordinance providing for the new code, his first official act as the city's chief executive this year.

The revised code covers new areas requiring sanitary regulation like water delivery and refilling services, environmental care, and vermin and rodent control.

Among other provisions, the code requires water refilling and delivery vehicles to secure a sanitary clearance from the city health office every month.

Water facilities shall also undergo a monthly bacteriological examination on top of a "semi-annual systematic chemical examination" to be conducted by a laboratory duly authorized by the city health office.

A whole chapter in the code is devoted to regulations for the water sources of ice plants, condominiums, hotels, subdivisions and townhouses.

Another chapter deals with waste disposal, including provisions forbidding the burning of garbage in the city and requiring the segregation of biodegradable garbage.

The code also covers slaughterhouse practices. For instance, a new rule stipulates that livestock animals intended for butchering must be slaughtered within three days of delivery.

The code will be implemented and enforced by the city health office.

US to replace arsenal with new nuke weapons

WASHINGTON—THE BUSH ADministration is expected to announce this week a major step forward in the building of the country's first new nuclear warhead in nearly two decades. It will propose combining elements of competing designs from two weapons laboratories in an approach that some experts argue is risky.

The new weapon would replace the nation's existing arsenal of aging warheads with a new generation meant to be sturdier, more reliable, safer from accidental detonation and more secure from theft by terrorists.

The announcement, to be made by the interagency Nuclear Weapons Council, avoids making a choice between the two designs for a new weapon, called the Reliable Replacement Warhead. But the council's decision to seek a hybrid design, combining well-tested elements from an older design with new safety and security elements from a more novel approach, could delay the production of the weapon. It also raises the question of whether the United States will ultimately be forced to end its moratorium on underground nuclear testing.

On Friday, Bryan Wilkes, a spokesperson for the National Nuclear Security Administration of the Energy Department, said the government would not proceed with the Reliable Replacement Warhead "if it is determined that testing is needed." But other officials in the administration have said that the White House should make no commitment on testing.

While proponents of the new weapon said that it would replace older weapons that could deteriorate over time, and reduce the chances of a detonation if weapons fell into the wrong hands, critics have long argued that this is the wrong moment for Washington to produce a new nuclear warhead of any kind.

At a time when the administration is trying to persuade the world to put sanctions on North Korea and Iran to halt their nuclear programs, those critics argue, any move to improve the American arsenal will be seen as hypocritical. Should the United States decide to conduct a test, officials said, China and Russia would feel free to do the same.

The two teams competing to design the weapon, one at Los Alamos in New Mexico and the other at the Livermore National Laboratory in California, approached the problem with very different philosophies, nuclear officials and experts said. Livermore drew on a single, robust design that, before the testing moratorium, was detonated in the 1980s under a desolate patch of Nevada desert. The weapon, however, never entered the nation's nuclear stockpile.

The Los Alamos team drew on aspects of many weapons from the stockpile and pulled them together in a novel design that has never undergone testing.

The question now, arms experts said, is whether a mix-and-match approach that combines the two will produce a clever hybrid or an unworkable dud. *NYT*

Violence rages in Somalia over disarmament

A SOMALI refugee girl bites her fingers at Ifo camp where about 160,000 Somali refugees are held, near Dadaab, northeastern Kenya, Jan. 6. REUTERS

KISMAYO, SOMALIA—HUNdreds of Somalis stormed Saturday into the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia's already unsteady capital, to hurl rocks at Ethiopian troops allied with the government and to protest a disarmament program that Somali leaders ended up scrapping.

Meanwhile, near Kismayo, along Somalia's southern coast, Ethiopian-led forces continued to hunt down the last remnants of the once powerful Islamist forces, who ruled much of the country until Ethiopia and its powerful army intervened last month.

According to Abdul Rashid Hidig, a government official in Kismayo, the Ethiopian-led forces blew up several of the Islamists' armed pickup trucks, leaving hundreds of fighters cornered in a remote jungle with their backs to the Indian Ocean and no way to escape. "I think it will be over very soon," Hidig said.

Still, a pack of gunmen attacked a government patrol near Kismayo's market Saturday night, and the cracks and whistles of their high-powered rifles echoed across what had been a rather quiet town. It was unclear if anyone was hurt.

Despite much tactical success in recent weeks, Somalia's transitional government appears to have failed its first leadership test: disarmament. After 16 years of anarchy, the streets of Mogadishu are awash with military-grade weaponry, much of it in the hands of illiterate teenagers. Scooping up these guns was one of the first goals of the transitional government, which had struggled for the past two years to assert control and then, nearly overnight, found itself in charge of a needy, violent country.

On Monday, Ali Mohammed Gedi, a veterinarian turned transitional prime minister, demanded that all Somalis surrender their weapons in three days. Only a handful of Gedi's allies complied, so the prime minister extended the deadline, but still, most Somalis did not give up their guns.

Even former military officers disagreed with Gedi's approach, saying it would take months, not days, to disarm the populace and that the government should negotiate with militiamen and clan elders.

With the new deadline set to expire Saturday morning and with Gedi threatening house-to-house searches, riots exploded. *NYT*

As a week passes, slim chance of finding plane

MAKASSAR, INDONESIA—INdonesia beefed up its search for a missing passenger plane Sunday, dispatching more spotter aircraft to try to locate the jet nearly a week after its mysterious disappearance.

The scale of the task is immense, with search and rescue teams faced with scouring tens of thousands of square miles of land and sea—greater than the size of many small countries.

Three relatives of missing passengers, who were allowed to overfly part of the area on a military Boeing reconnaissance plane, admitted that the chances of success were slim.

"Looking at the thick clouds, from the conditions above, the chances of finding them appear much smaller," said Fanny Duran, who is still waiting for news of three family members on board the Adam Air plane.

The reconnaissance aircraft flew over Toraja and Luwu in South Sulawesi and Poso lake in Central Sulawesi.

The Adam Air plane with 102 passengers and crew vanished off radar screens on Jan. 1 halfway through a flight from Surabaya, on Java island, to Manado on the northeast tip of Sulawesi island.

Ships, planes and some 2,700 police, air force, army and search and rescue personnel are now searching for the jet as frantic relatives wait for news of loved ones.

The massive air, sea and land sweep has been badly hampered by bad weather and rugged terrain and uncertainty over where the Boeing went down.

"It is primarily a question of bad visibility. With the low hanging clouds and bad weather, it is difficult to get a clear view of the ground," said W. Suparman, who heads the search and rescue office in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

Overland, the difficult terrain and lack of telecommunications present more problems.

First Air Marshal Eddy Suyanto, who is coordinating the search operations, said three planes based in Makassar were deployed Sunday to comb the central belt of Sulawesi, from the Makassar Strait to the Tolo Bay.

Another took off from an airport in Palu, Central Sulawesi, said Air Force Major Endik of the search and rescue command centre at Makassar.

"These areas have been flown over previously but today (Sunday) we will comb them again from the air," he told reporters. *AFP*

New hi-tech gadgets at US electronics show

EXHIBITOR shows off the S-XGen ultra mobile PC at the 2007 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Jan. 6. The PC runs the Windows Pocket PC operating system, has a 20GB-hard drive, 4-inch screen, fold out keyboard and weighs only 14 ounces. REUTERS

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA—PEOPLE are snapping up new technology, altering the fabric of society from the heart of the home to the driver's seat, the organizer of the world's largest consumer electronics show said here Saturday.

Sales of consumer electronics from manufacturers to retailers in the United States is expected to surpass $155 billion in 2007, a six percent rise from 2006, according to the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA).

Last year the industry saw unprecedented growth of 13 percent, CEA lead analyst Sean Wargo said at a news conference held as final touches were put on the 40th annual International CES (Consumer Electronics Show), opening Monday in Las Vegas.

"The industry outlook is proof-positive that Americans can't do without their beloved consumer electronics," said CEA chief executive Gary Shapiro.

The category with the most "buzz" this past year was flat-screen televisions, sales of which sizzled as prices dropped, according to Wargo.

Portable navigation devices were a surprising "sleeper category" with sales coming in second only to the televisions, Wargo said.

"Consumers are adopting new technology faster than ever," he said. "The adoption curve greatly exceeds anything we've seen before." The typical US home has 26 electronic devices, according to CEA statistics.

"Look at where we were in 1975," Wargo said. "That is an impressive change in the make-up of our houses." Key themes reflected among the 2,700 exhibitors at the four-day show include a continued trend toward captivating realism in devices ranging from televisions and computers to video game consoles and digital cameras.

Video games are also becoming gateways to other features such as movies and access to online communities. For digital cameras, the "mega-pixel revolution" is over and the focus is on ease of use, Wargo said.

Wargo said higher levels of realism would be delivered by new multi-format DVD technology and that Warner Brothers would announce a universal disk that could be read by Blu-Ray and competing devices.

Greater wireless, broadband and mobile telephone connectivity was another strong theme at the show, along with the boom in home computer networks, Internet telephony referred to as VoIP and Bluetooth wireless devices.

"We are not just a hardware show any more, we are much more about the services and the software," Wargo said. "VoIP, blogs and vlogs are much more the fabric of our industry." Other show trends were converging technologies and making them portable, and the embrace of "disruptive" channels of distribution such as websites YouTube, Bebo and MySpace to get video, films or music.

"These are new conduits that go against the mainstream model of cable, television ... we see a shift from old models to new," Wargo said. *AFP*

Temperatures in Tibet reach record highs

WITH a silent Astroland and shuttered boardwalk stands behind them, Pete Rocanelli, left, and Bob Paventi sit on the Coney Island beach in the Brooklyn borough of New York, Saturday, Jan. 6. Unusually high temperatures in the low 70s were reported in parts of New York City on Saturday. AP

BEIJING—TEMPERATURES IN RUGGED TIbet have hit record highs in recent days, China's state press said Sunday, as a scientific survey warned of the impact of global warming in the Himalayan region.

Friday's temperature in the Qamdo area of eastern Tibet was 21.8 degrees Celsius (71 degrees Fahrenheit), 1.7 degrees higher than the previous record set for the same day in 1996, Xinhua news agency reported.

In Dengqen county, also in eastern Tibet, the mercury reached 16.6 degrees Celsius on Thursday, 2.5 degrees higher than the previous record for the same day set in 2001, it said.

Eight other places across the region also recorded record-breaking daily temperatures over the past few days, it added.

Meteorological data in the Himalayan region began to be collected in 1970.

China's Tibet plateau, seen as a barometer of world climate conditions, is experiencing accelerating glacial melt and other ecological change, the leading People's Daily reported Friday.

The mountainous region's glaciers have been melting at an average rate of 131.4 square kilometers (50 square miles) per year over the past 30 years, the paper said, citing a recent geological study.

Researchers who conducted the survey said that even if global warming did not worsen, the area's glaciers would be reduced by nearly a third by 2050 and up to half by 2090, at the current rate.

The survey, conducted by the Remote Sensing Department of the China Aero Geophysical Survey, also found a rapidly rising snow line, shrinking wetlands, and increased desertification compared with 30 years ago, the paper said.

These problems will worsen as the glacial melt—which has accelerated in recent years—continues, further depleting the area's water resources, the researchers predicted.

The Tibet plateau, which includes the Chinese portion of the Himalayas, accounts for nearly one quarter of China's landmass, stretching from Tibet to the adjacent provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan.

A separate national assessment released last week on the impact of climate change said temperatures in China would rise significantly in coming decades, water shortages would worsen, and extreme weather events would intensify. *AFP*

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
DR. JOSE FABELLA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital invites interested bidders for the bidding of the following hospital equipment:

A. Medical / Office Equipment

1.	Hospital Bed (50 units) P 17,000.00/unit	17.	Ventilator, Adult (2 units) 780,000.00/unit
2.	Mechanical Bed (20 units) 40,000.00/unit	18.	Aircon, Split, (4 units) 160,000.00/unit
3.	Mattress, Adult (146 units) 2,499.00/unit	19.	Fire Extinguishers (20 units) 9,950.00/unit
4.	Syringe Pump (2 units) 70,000.00/unit	20.	Copier Machine, HD (10 units) 127,500.00/unit
5.	Infusion Pump (2 units) 85,000.00/unit	21.	Electrocautery, Adult (1 unit) 280,000.00
6.	BP Apparatus (15 units) 13,000.00/unit	22.	Bassinet (50 units) 6,100.00/unit
7.	IV Trainer (Arm) (4 units) 46,000.00/unit	23.	Generator Set (1 unit) 497,000.00
8.	Examining Table (5 units) 18,400.00/unit	24.	Ultrasound Machine (1 unit) 1,300,000.00
9.	Breast Pump, elect. (4 units) 105,000.00/unit	25.	Fetal Monitor (2 units) 250,000.00/unit
10.	Ultrasound Machine w/ Doppler (1 unit) 6M	26.	Incubator (4 units) 300,000.00/unit
11.	Refrigerated Centrifuge (1 unit) 2,300,000.00	27.	Oxygen Manifold (1 unit) 705,000.00
12.	Freezing Microtome (1 unit) 1,700,000.00	28.	Mobile X-ray (1 unit) 1,800,000.00
13.	Copy Printer (1 unit) 259,000.00	29.	Radiant Warmer (2 units) 353,500.00/unit
14.	Pulse Oximeter (4 units) 75,000.00	30.	Paging System (1 unit) 200,000.00
15.	Sterilizer (1 unit) 650,000.00	31.	Electrical Wiring (1 lot) 1,700,000.00
16.	Ventilator, Neonate (2 units) P 720,000.00/unit		

B. Equipment Rental	ABC
Chemistry Analyzer	4,200,000.00
Immunology Machine	4,704,000.00
Hematology Analyzer	4,568,400.00
Blood Gas Analyzer	1,140,000.00

Schedule of Activities:

	Pre-Bid Conference	Bid Opening
A. Medical/Office Equipment	January 23, 2007, 2:00 p.m. Reception Hall	February 6, 2007, 1:30 p.m. Reception Hall
B. Equipment Rental	January 24, 2007 2:00 p.m. Reception Hall	February 8, 2007 1:30 p.m. Reception Hall

Bid documents may be secured at the BAC Secretariat, Administrative Office. For details, please contact telephone no. 735-7144.

The DJFMH reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality found therein and to accept such bids as may be considered advantageous to the government.

The DJFMH-BAC assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses or losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) ELISEA S. MARQUEZ, M.D., D.P.B.A.
Chairperson Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – Jan. 8 & 15, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Surigao del Norte
MUNICIPALITY OF CLAVER
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
oOo

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Municipality of Claver, Surigao del Norte, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for Eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder Contract:

Name of the Contract	Construction of Municipal Commercial Center
Location	Barangay Tayaga, Claver, Surigao del Norte
Brief Description	Construction of 46 units Dry Market Stalls w/o Doors, CHB Drainage Canal & Tile Works
Approved Budget for the Contract	P11,854,334.85
Source of Fund	Land Bank of the Philippines Loan Proceeds
Equipment Needed	1 unit One Bagger Concrete Mixer, 1-unit Concrete Vibrator, 1-Unit Bar Cutter, 1-unit Pay Loader, 1-unit Dump truck, 2-Units Welding machine and 1-set Oxygen & LPG cutting outfit
Technical Personnel Requirements	1-Project Engineer, 1 Construction Foreman
Contract Duration	330 Calendar days

Prospective bidder should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provision of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

	BAC Activities	Schedule
·	Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	Jan. 22, 2007
2.	Issuance of Eligibility Forms	Jan. 22, 2007
3.	Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	Jan. 25, 2007
4.	Eligibility Check	Jan. 25, 2007
5.	Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	Jan. 29, 2007
6.	Issuance of Bid Documents	Jan. 31, 2007
7.	Pre-Bid Conference	Jan. 31, 2007
8.	Receipt and Opening of Bids	Feb. 15, 2007
9.	Bid Evaluation	Feb. 19, 2007
10.	Post-Qualifications	Feb. 21, 2007
11	Notice of Awards	Feb. 26, 2007

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at BAC Secretariat Municipal Hall, Claver, Surigao del Norte, upon submission of LOI, and upon payment of non-refundable amount of P750.00 to the Municipal Treasury Office. Prospective bidders shall submit the eligibility requirements and may obtain results of the Eligibility Check to the BAC Secretariat at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC as eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P12,000.00 to the Municipal Treasury Office.

The Local Government Unit of Claver and the BAC members assume no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bids.

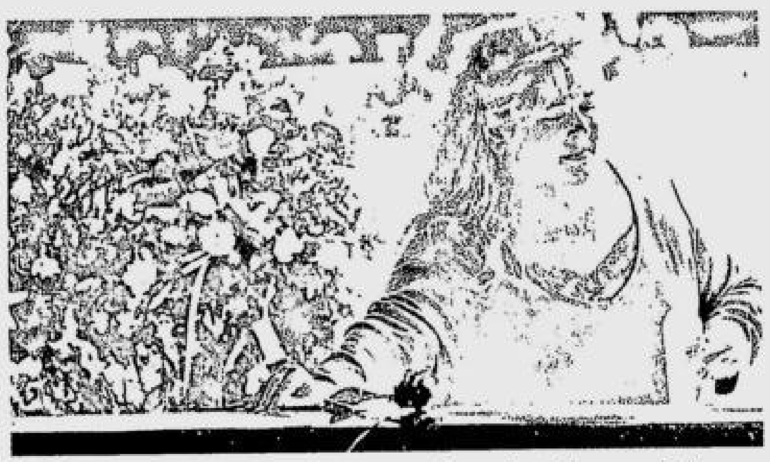
APPROVED BY:
(Sgd.) EMILIA B. ELPA
BAC Chairman

(PDI – January 8 & 15, 2007)

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Democrats to fight for end of Iraq war



LORI Ann McCormick places a rose on the casket of her son Pvt. Clinton McCormick, killed in Iraq on Dec. 27, at his funeral Jan. 6, in Jacksonville, Florida AP

WASHINGTON—THE NEW DEMOCRATIC MAjority in the US Congress was poised Sunday for the first major policy confrontation with President George W. Bush, demanding an end to the "intractable war in Iraq."

The call came days before Bush is scheduled to announce his new strategy for victory in the violence-torn country. The plan will reportedly call for bolstering the US military presence in Baghdad by up to 20,000 troops and pouring into Iraq millions of dollars of new aid to create jobs.

But in a weekly Democratic radio address on Saturday, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid made clear the congressional majority saw the solution in getting the troops out after nearly four years of war rather than sending more of them in.

"In pursuit of results, the new Congress will face many challenges this year, but none more important than working with President Bush to find an end to the intractable war in Iraq," Reid said.

In contrast to Bush, the Senate leader said Iraq was in the middle of a "civil war" and argued against any attempt to resolve the problem by pumping up US troop levels.

"These military professionals tell us there is no purely military solution in Iraq, there is only a political solution in Iraq. They say adding more US combat troops in the middle of this civil war undermines our efforts to get the Iraqis to take responsibility."

He said US soldiers and their families had already sacrificed a great deal for Iraq.

"Rather than deploying additional forces to Iraq, we hope the president will make clear to the Iraqi government that the time has come for them to assume more responsibility for their future, and that he will announce he is beginning the phased redeployment of our forces in the next four to six months," Reid said.

The Senate leader stopped short of saying Democrats will use their newly-gained power in Congress to block funding for new troop deployments should the administration opt for a "surge."

But he promised Democrats will use upcoming Capitol Hill hearings "to ask tough questions, demand real solutions, and keep working to bring this war to a close."

AFP

US military's deaths in Iraq reach 3,000

BAGHDAD—THE US MILITARY'S losses in Iraq touched 3,000 since the invasion of the country to topple Saddam Hussein in March 2003, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

The latest announcement comes as US president George W. Bush is set to declare in the next few days his new strategy to curb the daily violence in Iraq which leaves more than 100 people killed, according to the United Nations.

On Sunday, the US military announced the death of a soldier in small arms fire near Baghdad a day ago which took its losses to 3,000.

On its website the Pentagon said 2,999 servicemen had died in Iraq since the US-led invasion as of Jan. 5.

According to the Pentagon of those dead 2,415 were killed in combat across the war-torn country, while 585 died due to "non-hostile" causes.

More than 22,700 soldiers were also wounded since the invasion.

Of the 3,000 dead, only 139 died during the actual invasion between March 19 and April 30, 2003.

In December 2006, a total of 111 soldiers were killed, making it the deadliest month since November 2004.

Also in December, the number of American deaths exceeded the number of 2,973 people killed in Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York.

According to the Pentagon, some 44 percent of US casualties in Iraq have come from roadside bombs or improvised-explosive-devices (IEDs) as the military calls them.

These bombs range in complexity from a small mortar round detonated by a trip wire to sophisticated charges that can punch through the thickest armor.

Small arms fire, including that from the dreaded snipers that have increasingly made an appearance in the past year, accounts for just under 20 percent of the US casualties.

About a fifth of the US deaths in Iraq, 585 people, had nothing to do with combat at all, with 65 percent dying in accidents, particularly those involving helicopters. Another 93 servicemen took their own lives.

In Vietnam between 1963 and 1973 the US military lost nearly 60,000 servicemen, in the Korean war between 1950 and 1953 it lost 44,000 people, or in the second world war more than 400,000 were killed between 1941 and 1945.

AFP

PARADE OF THE GRISLY

String bands perform during the Mummers Parade, Jan. 6, in Philadelphia. AP

US insists Castro is near death

WASHINGTON—THE US INTELLIGENCE community still believes Cuban leader Fidel Castro is terminally ill and has "months, not years" to live, a spokesperson said Saturday.

Though a Spanish doctor visited Castro last month and denied he had cancer, Ross Feinstein, spokesperson for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, said "The bottom line: He is terminally ill."

"We believe that he has months, not years," Feinstein said, adding that "nothing has changed in the director's assessment" since the doctor's comments on Castro late last month.

US Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte was quoted by the newspaper The Washington Post on Dec. 15 that "everything we see indicates it will not be much longer ... months, not years" for the 80-year-old Cuban leader.

Spanish doctor Jose Luis Garcia Sabrido told reporters in Madrid after returning from Cuba last month that Castro, who underwent an operation on July 27, is "in a process of slow but progressive recovery" and does not need further surgery.

Garcia Sabrido, who heads a surgery unit at a major Madrid hospital and is described by the Spanish media as a top gastroenterologist, described Castro's condition as "fine." In power since 1959, Fidel Castro has not been seen in public for five months, and few medical updates have been made public since his reported intestinal surgery in July. In Cuba, Castro's health is being treated as a state secret.

Castro named his brother and defense chief Raul Castro, 75, as the interim leader of the lone Communist-rule country in the Americas on July 31.

And Fidel Castro's absence at a Dec. 2 military parade stunned people and sparked speculation he might be seriously ill, or near death.

Castro also sat out the National Assembly's last session of the year, marking only the second time in 30 years that the Cuban leader has missed an assembly meeting.

Then, in a statement released Dec. 30, Castro was quoted as saying his recuperation will be a long process but that "the battle is far from lost." US officials say privately they have doubts about Garcia Sabrido's assessment of the octogenarian revolutionary's health. *AFP*

Attack of zombie computers a growing threat

IN THEIR PERSISTENT QUEST TO breach the Internet's defenses, the bad guys are honing their weapons and increasing their firepower.

With growing sophistication, they are taking advantage of programs that secretly install themselves on thousands or even millions of personal computers, band these computers together into an unwitting army of zombies, and use the collective power of the dragooned network to commit Internet crimes.

These systems, called botnets, are being blamed for the huge spike in spam that bedeviled the Internet in recent months, as well as fraud and data theft.

Security researchers have been concerned about botnets for some time because they automate and amplify the effects of viruses and other malicious programs.

What is new is the escalating scale of the problem—and the precision with which some of the programs can scan computers for specific information, like corporate and personal data, to drain money from online bank accounts and stock brokerages.

"It's the perfect crime, both low-risk and high-profit," said Gadi Evron, a computer security researcher for an Israeli-based firm, Beyond Security, who coordinates an international volunteer effort to fight botnets. "The war to make the Internet safe was lost long ago, and we need to figure out what to do now."

David Dagon, a Georgia Institute of Technology researcher who is a co-founder of Damballa, a company focusing on controlling botnets, said the consensus among scientists is that botnet programs are present on about 11 percent of the more than 650 million computers attached to the Internet.

Plagues of viruses and other malicious programs have periodically swept through the Internet since 1988, when there were only 60,000 computers online. Each time, computer security managers and users have cleaned up the damage and patched holes in systems.

In recent years, however, such attacks have become endemic, forcing increasingly stringent security responses.

NYT

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Fear grips India village after murders

By Tripti Lahiri

NITHARI, INDIA—SAROJ USED TO play catch and hopscotch in the streets with her friends. Now, the 11-year-old girl and her friends are forced to jump and skip on the rooftop of a shabby tenement.

"I didn't feel like going any more and my mother also told me not to go," says Saroj, who lives in Nithari, a squalid village outside the Indian capital New Delhi—and the scene of a horrific series of murders.

Two years ago, the children of Nithari started to vanish without a trace.

Residents, most of them migrant laborers from eastern India who work in factories, as domestic helps or as cycle-rickshaw drivers, say that 38 children have gone missing from the village, which is located in largely affluent Noida township.

Ten days ago, police unearthed a mass of bones and rotted clothes from a drain—all that was left of at least 17 victims, nearly all of them children. The overwhelming stench led them to the gruesome find.

Local businessman Moninder Singh Pandher and his domestic help Surender Koli have been arrested on suspicion of rape and murder, but angry residents say police failed to protect their loved ones. And they are still afraid.

"If it is only the two of them, then I can feel safe because they are in jail. But if this is the work of a group ... they can even operate from jail," said Vimlesh Gautam, 18, as she washed clothes outside her house.

"We don't have faith in the police. This matter was with the police for two years." Udai Singh of the Noida Migrants' Association explains: "They would tell the villagers, 'We will look but you also look'. Or they would ask for 'expense money' to make a team to go look for the kids." Six policemen have been sacked and three suspended for neglect of duty in the case.

Police have said they are probing whether the crime was connected to the illegal organ trade, and an autopsy report said the 17 victims—mainly young girls—had been sliced up with "butcher-like" precision.

The duo is undergoing questioning by the police using truth serum, or sodium penthanol, to try to discover the motive and exact number of killings.

As the children disappeared from Nithari at the rate of one or two a month, many from the alley that cuts through the crowded shantytown to the main road, residents slowly curtailed their children's activities.

Many stopped their kids from going out to play, instead locking them in the tiny thatched and plastic wrapped huts rented to new arrivals for 400 rupees (10 dollars) a month. Others barred their children from going to school.

"We were afraid. He is school age and I got scared to send him to school," said Shefali Haldar, pointing at her 4-year-old son who could have started kindergarten this year.

"You have to go by that road where they used to disappear from," said Haldar, whose 13-year-old niece Bina was a victim.

For parents too, life stopped when the children vanished into thin air.

Bina's mother Aloki cries all the time, weeping for the quiet, timid child who loved television soaps, her family said.

Jhabbu Lal, the washerman father of 10-year-old Jyoti—the first girl to disappear—became a man possessed.

"We moved away from here after my sister disappeared. But my father used to come at odd hours—it was like he was hardly there," said his 17-year-old son Rajesh.

"He went all around Delhi searching. We spent whatever we had on this—we sold the house in our family village." Since Jyoti's clothes were found among the remains, Lal has hardly moved from his spot outside Pandher's house—now known as the "house of horrors." Villagers have swarmed in front of the police barricades surrounding the house since the bodies were found, pelting officers with stones, demanding that the house be torn down and begging for information about the investigation. *AFP*

SPORTS

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ECOLOGY
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Flagrant foul on RP basketball

COMMENTARY

THE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION OF THE Philippines (BAP) has committed an unforgivable flagrant foul.

It hit and tried to cripple its own president who was well on his way to scoring a winning basket for Philippine basketball.

This violation should draw a prompt and proper reaction from the international basketball federation (Fiba).

Banned by the Philippine Olympic Committee for its many sins against local basketball, the BAP fired its president, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who was in the process of finalizing an agreement with major basketball stakeholders.

That unity should effectively result in the renewal of Philippine basketball.

Unfortunately, the BAP could not see the soundness of Estrada's decision.

He was accused of acting on his own.

But what is a good leader for if he could not honestly decide for his association and make vital moves for the common good?

By firing Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, the BAP has unwittingly fired at itself.

It has unwittingly written its own death sentence.

There's no way for the Fiba but to take proper action by effectively encouraging the formation of a new, responsible body that will oversee the affairs of Philippine basketball.

It could next lift its suspension on Philippine basketball.

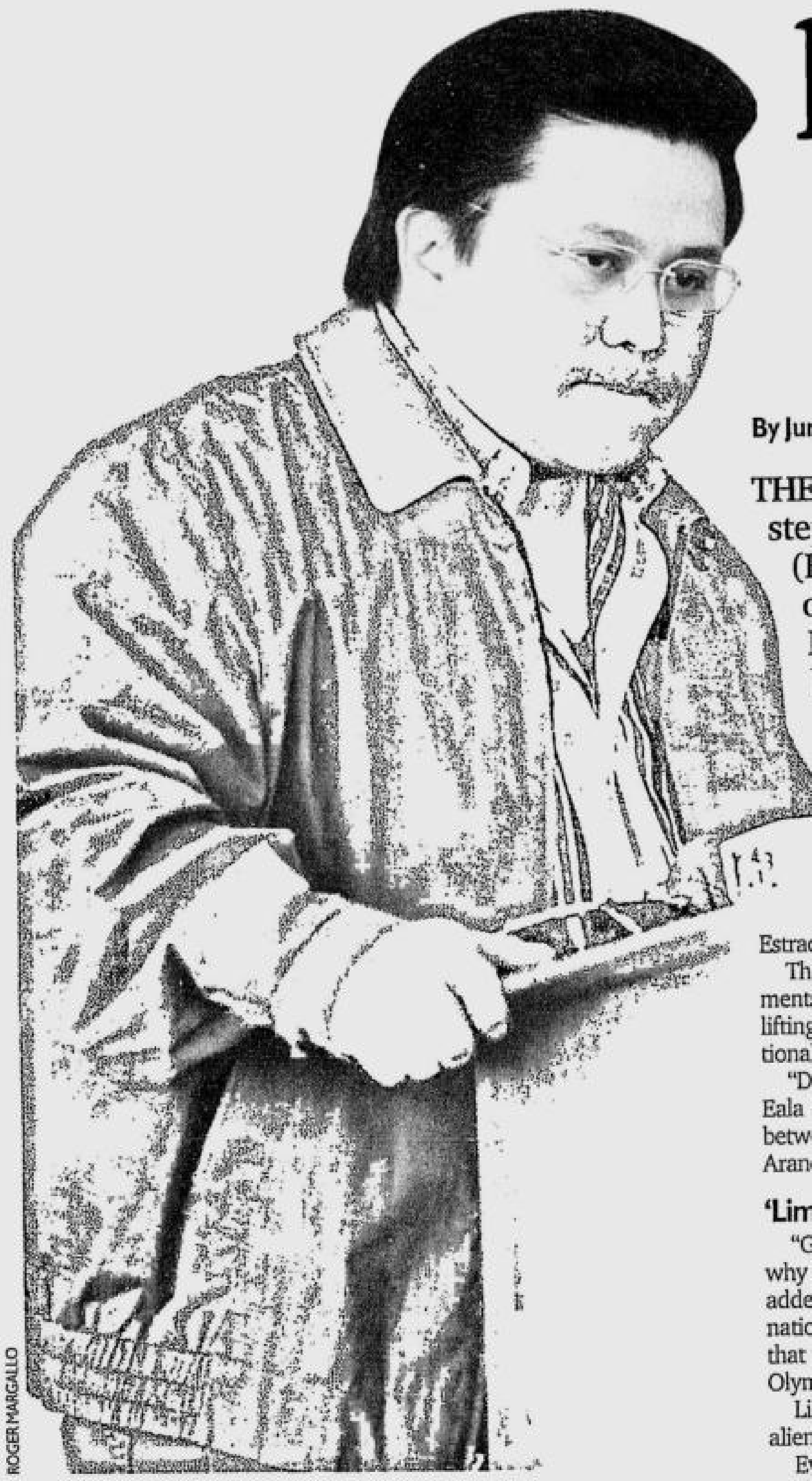
The Fiba need not be told that the BAP, after it has pushed Philippine basketball to the lowest level, has long surpassed its patented incompetence and wickedness.

The Fiba should mete out the proper penalties and help Sen. Estrada score the winner for Philippine basketball.

Or is the Fiba waiting for an urgent warning from the International Olympic Committee that the BAP and its discredited, degenerate sector have no business being part of the Olympic movement?

—Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA)

BAP sec-gen blamed for Jinggoy's ouster



ROGER MARGALLO

SEN. JINGGOY Estrada: BAP president ousted by his subordinates.

By June Navarro and Musong R. Castillo

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION (PBA) YESTERDAY stepped up its attack on the Basketball Association Philippines (BAP), calling the controversy-wracked organization "unpatriotic" and "deceitful" after its decision to ditch Sen. Jinggoy Estrada as its president, thereby scuttling efforts to unify the basketball landscape.

"This is the height of unpatriotism," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala. "It was deceitful and most of all dishonorable."

Speaking in a somber but emphatic monotone and taking pains to keep his temper in check, Eala went on to single out the person responsible for the decision to fire Estrada.

That move, Eala said, overturned developments which could have paved the way for the lifting of the country's suspension from international competitions.

"Diplomacy is over, blame must be placed," Eala said in an impromptu press conference in between yesterday's PBA doubleheader at the Araneta Coliseum.

'Lim must explain'

"Graham Lim must explain in Plaza Miranda why the Philippines cannot play in Fiba-Asia," he added, referring to the tournament of the international basketball federation (Fiba) this year that will serve as a qualifier for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Lim, who is still facing deportation as an illegal alien, is secretary-general of the BAP.

Even a ranking official of the BAP admits that unification efforts tumbled back to square one, making it difficult for the country to convince the Fiba to lift its suspension and allow the Philippines to compete for an Olympic slot in June.

"As far as the BAP is concerned, the deal forged by MVP (Manny V. Pangilinan) and Sen. (Jinggoy) Estrada is off," said the BAP official who requested anonymity.

Estrada still 'president'

Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, however, earlier told the INQUIRER that Estrada could still stand as president of the BAP at a press conference scheduled today.

Puentevella said the BAP national congress has yet to ratify the action taken by the board to declare open the position of president.

That decision was viewed as a means to preempt a major press conference scheduled today where Estrada and Pangilinan are expected to announce results of unification talks.

"[Because of Estrada's ouster], negotiations will again go back to where it started, and there's no more guarantee that basketball in this country will be united," said the BAP official.

He was right on target, based on the PBA's pronouncement.

"We will never support the devious scheme of Graham Lim and his assistants," Eala said. "The PBA condemns this move as doublespeak and condemns such action. We will never support this undertaking of the BAP."

Estrada reached an agreement with Pangilinan that would have unified the basketball stakeholders in the country under one national sports association, a requisite the Fiba set for the suspension to be lifted.

Under the pact forged in Hong Kong recently, Estrada would serve as chair of SBP with Pangilinan as president.

But BAP officials found the agreement unacceptable and said that Estrada failed to consult the board. The BAP also insisted on keeping the name of the 70-year-old organization despite an earlier deal to create the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas as the sport's governing body.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach Estrada for comment. But a reliable source said Estrada would attend the press conference today with Pangilinan at the PLDT offices in Makati City.

Pangilinan, who learned of the BAP move last Saturday, deferred comment until today's press conference.

The top BAP official, who seemed partial to the SBP, offered a solution.

Four top stakeholders

"For starters, the officials of the SBP should agree to keep the name of the BAP," he said.

By numbers, the BAP is the dominant organization with 66 member associations compared to the 21 of Pilipinas Basketball. But the PB members include the four top stakeholders of the sport—the PBA, the PPBL, the UAAP and the NCAA.

Earlier, PBL chief Chino Trinidad blasted the BAP and called on the Fiba to take a second look at the basketball controversy in the country.

"It's high time for Fiba to realize that the only entity that doesn't want the process to prosper is the BAP," Trinidad told the INQUIRER.

PSA Award for Everest conquerors

FROM THE PEAK OF Mt. Everest to the deserts of Doha, Qatar, Filipino athletes who did their share in making 2006 a bumper crop for Philippine sports will be honored on Jan. 18 during the PSA-SMC Annual Awards at the Mall of Asia.

Sharing the limelight together with the eight personalities, led by boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao, named Athletes of the Year by the 58-year-old association, are the first three Filipinos to conquer Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain, and the silver and bronze medalists in the last Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

Leo Oracion, Pastor Emata and Romy Garduche, who climbed the summit of the

PSA/A24

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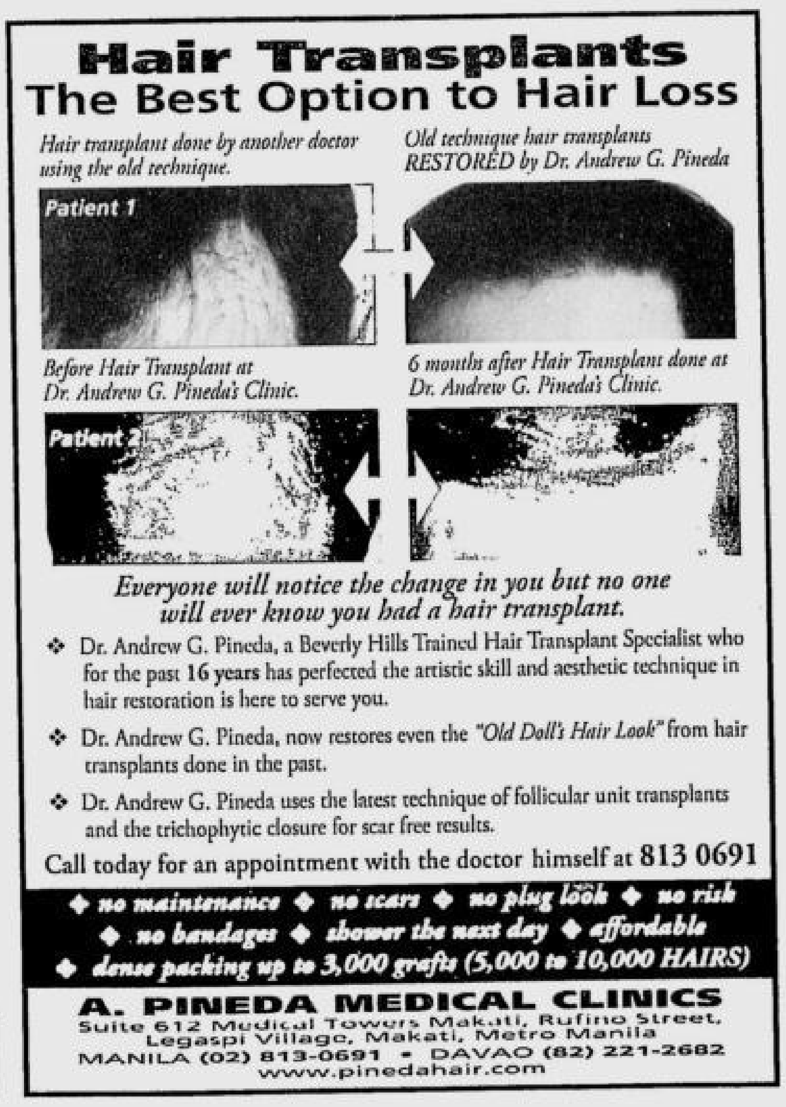
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The dirtiest game in town

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

OF COURSE, YOU'VE HEARD OF GAME-fixing in Philippine basketball.

We all had heard of how gangsters had supposedly manipulated some game results here.

There's also reason to believe some matches had been fixed to the tune of millions of pesos in hidden bets.

You think game-fixing was dirty enough?

Wait until you get appraised on the latest turbulence in the national basketball scene.

* * *

Nothing could be odder.

No other game could be dirtier.

We talk here of the messy game the Basketball Association of the Philippines and its president, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, have ended up playing.

Estrada and the BAP were supposed to be in the same squad.

But Jinggoy, as skipper, has been hacked, hard-fouled—and prevented from scoring a winning basket by his own teammates.

Turbulence on the national basketball scene has escalated, with the dreaded BAP sector making sure a new record in hideousness was established.

* * *

Yes, this is about how BAP directors suddenly ganged up on its president.

As noted here on a fresh New Year, Estrada was in an enviable position to score a winner that should result in total renewal for RP basketball.

All Jinggoy has had to do was keep steady and refuse to be distracted.

For the record, Estrada, as president of the BAP, and tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan have joined hands and sealed a pact which should effectively result in the lifting by the international basketball federation (Fiba) of its suspension on Philippine basketball.

As agreed, Pangilinan will be president and Estrada chair of the Samahang Basketball ng Pilipinas (SBP), a body composed of well-meaning and responsible sectors in Philippine basketball.

* * *

It was kept from the general public, but this discredited BAP sector had rejected Estrada's well-applauded pact with Pangilinan.

The dreaded group, obviously goaded again by the BAP sec-gen Graham Lim, claimed Estrada, despite his noble intentions, had acted on his own.

To repeat, the BAP group had again tried to use media to elevate its selfish intent.

It came up with a press release meant to muddle up the scene, but this was thrown into the waste basket by a solid, responsible sector in the national sportswriting community.

* * *

For his part, Jinggoy Estrada played it firm and proceeded to pursue the formal establishment of the SBP which should ultimately result in the lifting of the Fiba suspension on the Philippines.

Sorry, but the dreaded BAP group could not run out of dirty tactics.

The group next fired Estrada, its own president—an unbelievable infraction equal to tripping a team captain who was driving in for the winning basket.

Estrada has humbly absorbed the foul and accepted the selfish decision by the BAP board.

* * *

Of course, Jinggoy was not giving up.

He's scheduled to attend a press conference today where he's expected to make a counter move.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Sportswriters Association found it its duty to issue a pooled editorial blasting the dirty game being played by the BAP *(See page A23)*.

The PSA has put the Fiba in a spot and it would be truly tragic if the ruling body of world basketball would again condone the flagrant foul committed by the BAP.

Truth is that, in firing Estrada, the BAP has also shot itself in the head.

The Fiba must stop being party to the dirtiest game in town.

Reyes, 3 other RP pool bets in 3-0 starts

DEFENDING champion Efren "Bata" Reyes in strong start.

Filipino results after three rounds: (9-ball banks division)—Efren "Bata" Reyes (3-0); Jose "Amang" Parica (3-0); Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat (3-0); Lee Van Corteza (3-0); Dennis Orcollo (2-1); Gandy Valle (2-1); Santos Sambajon (2-1); Francisco "Django" Bustamante (1-2)

EFREN "BATA" REYES AND JOSE "AMANG" Parica swept their first three matches to punctuate the Philippine campaign in the ongoing 2007 Derby City Classic at the Executive West Hotel yesterday in Louisville, Kentucky.

The 1999 World Pool champion Reyes scored wins against Clay Arman, Matthew Dugger and Jim Griffith in the 9-ball banks division, one of three tournaments slated in the $100,000-plus series in the hometown of former world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali.

The 55-year-old Parica, acknowledged leader of the Filipino billiards "invasion" in the United States in the 1980s, waylaid Robert Vettitoe, Roger Bennett and Helena Thornfeldt.

Matching the clean records of Reyes and Parica were Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat and Lee Van Corteza.

The 50-year-old Luat, the reigning San Miguel Asian 9-ball Kaohsiung leg winner and the 2006 US open runner-up, beat Danny Morgan, Darren Appleton and Brian Groce, while the 28-year-old Corteza, the 2006 All-Japan winner, bested Steve Perlow, Adam Haines and Martin Rimlinger.

The 9-ball banks, where Reyes is the defending champion, differs from the ordinary 9-ball competition as players must pocket the ball through bank shots, which also must be called. The first player to legally pocket five balls in this one-rack affair wins the game.

Santos Sambajon upset compatriot Francisco "Django" Bustamante to match the 2-1 win-loss record of 2006 World Pool Leaque champion Dennis Orcollo and 2006 BSCP National Championship runner-up Gandy Valle.

Bustamante has a 1-2-win-loss card following an early loss to David Broxson and a win over Victor Ignacio.

The 46-year-old Sambajon, now based in North Terrace, California, earlier bowed to former WPC champion Earl "The Pearl" Strickland before beating Jon Morra in the second round.

Strickland, Ralf Souquet, Yannick Beaufils and George Breedlove also won their third round games yesterday. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

Milo Marathon resumes Feb. 4 in Batangas City

THE 2007 RUNNING SEASON STARTS EARLY next month with the National Milo marathon kicking off its 31st edition with the first of its 26 regional elimination races on Feb. 4 in Batangas City.

Pat Goc Ong, Milo events sports executive, said the national marathon grand finals will be held on Nov. 18 to give the country's top runners a chance to recuperate before seeing action in the Southeast Asian Games in Thailand in the first week of December.

Ong said Rudy Biscocho will continue to serve as its national marathon organizer.

Four Milo races are actually scheduled next month with Puerto Princesa, Palawan hosting the second regional run on Feb. 11, Malolos, Bulacan taking its turn on Feb. 18 and Tarlac City on Feb. 25.

After a three-month break, the marathon races resume on June 24 in General Santos City. This will be followed by elimination runs in Zamboanga City on July 1, Davao City July 8; Metro Manila July 22; Tagbilaran City July 29; Tacloban City Aug. 5; Cebu City Aug. 12; Dumaguete City Aug. 19; Roxas, Capiz Aug. 26; Iloilo City Sept. 2; Naga City Sept. 9; Legaspi City Sept. 16; San Pablo City Sept. 23; Cagayan de Oro Sept. 30; Iligan Oct. 7; Butuan Oct 14; Laoag Oct.21; Tuguegarao Oct. 28; and Baguio City Nov. 4.

Also scheduled on Feb. 4 is the Adidas King of the Track Race in Baguio City. The Adidas race will also be held in Davao City on Feb. 25, Cebu City on March 4 and the KOTR Championship Run in Metro Manila on March 11.

Biscocho said plans are underway for the Adidas one-day simultaneous run in 10 key cities.

PSA Awards for three Mt. Everest conquerors

From page A23

29,035-foot mountain one after the other last summer, will be conferred the PSA President's Award while the Asiad medalists lead the list of people and entities to be cited by the country's oldest media organization.

Earlier, Pacquiao has been bestowed the honor as Athlete of the Year alongside seven others, namely, billiards champion Efren "Bata" Reyes and Ronnie Alcano, bowler Biboy Rivera and Asiad gold medal winners Joan Tipon, Violito Payla, Antonio Gabica and Rene Catalan.

PBA 2005-06 Most Valuable Player (MVP) James Yap (pro basketball) lead the six honorees to be given major awards together with Ken Bono (amateur basketball), Juvic Pagunsan (golf), Jonathan B. Hernandez (horseracing) and Real Spicy (horseracing).

Young golfers Dottie Ardina, Mia Legaspi and Cyna Rodriguez, together with rising chess prodigy Wesley So, on the other hand, are the recipients of the Antonio Siddayao award, given to athletes who showed promise at their young age.

ORACION

EMATA

GARDUCE

Receiving the PSA Lifetime Achievement award during the ceremony that begins at 3 p.m. is former World Chess Federation (Fide) head Florencio Campomanes while Eugene Torre, Asia's first Grandmaster, will be elevated to the PSA Hall of Fame.

Legendary golfer Ben Arda and two-time PSA president and former Manila Standard Today sports editor Bert Cuevas head the nine sports greats and personalities who will be feted with a posthumous award.

The complete list of awardees

ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

Manny Pacquiao, Violito Payla, Ronnie Alcano, Joan Tipon, Biboy Rivera, Antonio Gabica, Efren "Bata" Reyes, Rene Catalan

MAJOR AWARDS

James Yap (pro basketball); Ken Bono (amateur basketball); Juvic Pagunsan (golf); Santy Barnachea (cycling); JB Hernandez (horseracing); Real Spicy (horseracing)

PSA PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Leo Oracion, Pastor Emata, Romy Garduche

ANTONIO SIDDAYAO AWARD

Dottie Ardina, Cyna Rodriguez, Mia Legaspi, Wesley So

CITATIONS—Marie Antoinette Rivero, Tshomlee Go, Maria Marna Pabillore, Eduard Folayang, Jeffrey de Luna, Cecil Mamiit, Eric Taino, Kathleen Allora, Veronica Domingo, Manuel Rivero Jr., Godfrey Castro, Genebert Basadre, Michael Bibat, Noel Espinosa, Ramon S. Ang-SMC, Debbie de Villa, Ryan Mendoza, Francisco "Django" Bustamante, AF3, Wushu team, Erlina Pecante, Mateo Guidicelli, Dragon Boat team, Yen Makabenta, Juanito Mingarine, Philippine Football Federation, Sports Radio, Masco, Amaya Paz

SPECIAL AWARD

Recah Trinidad and Anvil Publishing

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Florencio Campomanes

HALL OF FAME

Eugene Torre

POSTHUMOUS AWARDS

Ben Arda, Bert Cuevas, Carlos Santos, Bana Sailani, Alex Arroyo, Redan Lopez, Rodrigo Abaquita, Deo Espinosa, Willy Victoria

MOST OUTSTANDING NSAs

Billiards, Boxing

POC-PSC PLAN

Athletes' nutrition, welfare top agenda

By June Navarro

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT.

The Philippine Olympic Committee will put premium on the nutritional needs of the national athletes once the country's sports leaders begin naming the potential medal winners for the 2008 Olympics.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco said a scientific approach would be employed on the athletes' food intake, depending on the nutritional demand of every sport.

"We're dead serious on giving priority to the nutrition of the athletes," said Cojuangco. "We would like to see the progress of every athlete based on what he eats."

Cojuangco explained that there would be specific diets for boxers, weightlifters, taekwondo-jins, track and field athletes, gymnasts, divers and archers, among others.

"We have good athletes, but in the long run, they usually run out of steam," he said. "With proper nutrition and the right technology, the athletes could perform better.

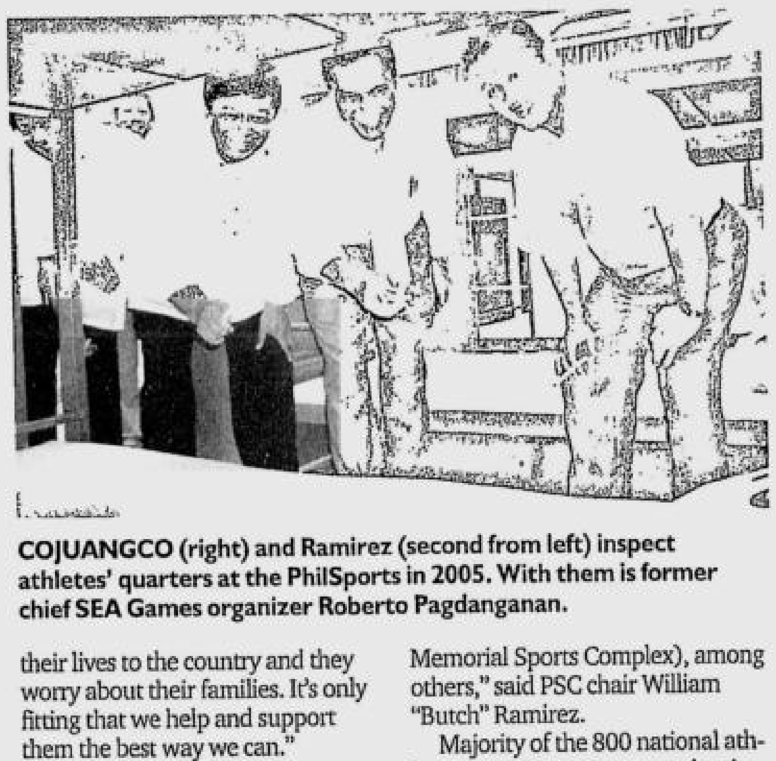
"If the budget is short to meet the nutritional needs of the athletes, we will be forced to trim down the number of athletes that will benefit from it."

Apart from the specialized diet and all-out aid for the training of the athletes, their families would also be taken cared of.

Philippine Sports Commission and POC officials are thinking of ways to sustain the livelihood and welfare of the families of athletes who train overseas.

"Besides being an athlete, these individuals most likely have no other source of income," said Cojuangco. "In fact, some of the athletes use the allowances they get from the PSC to provide for their families.

"They are giving the best years of their lives to the country and they worry about their families. It's only fitting that we help and support them the best way we can."



COJUANGCO (right) and Ramirez (second from left) inspect athletes' quarters at the PhilSports in 2005. With them is former chief SEA Games organizer Roberto Pagdanganan.

Meanwhile, PSC officials are poised to make an assessment on the programs and facilities offered by the government agency to the national athletes.

"We'll try to determine if we have to make a radical improvement on matters of physical fitness, dorm requirements and the food being served at the cafeteria (of the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex), among others," said PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez.

Majority of the 800 national athletes from 45 sports stay and train at the RMSC in Manila, the PhilSports Arena in Pasig and at Teachers' Camp in Baguio City, a satellite facility of the agency.

"We will consult the POC about the accommodation in these facilities," said Ramirez. "We have to set some guidelines to improve the accommodation of the athletes."

SPORTSWATCH

6 RP b'minton umpires get certification

THE BADMINTON ASIA CONFEDERATION (FORMERLY ASIAN BADMINTON Confederation) recently gave its accreditation and certification to six more Filipino umpires. Errol Chan, chair of the Philippine Badminton Association grassroots development program, said the BAC recognized the six Filipinos who passed the oral and written examinations for officiating. Certified as international umpires were Sergio Cabrera of Pampanga, Janelyn Fundal of Iloilo City, Anthony Bertumen of Quezon City, Herman Hernandez of Cavite, Jose Jardin of Baguio City and Cecilia Gernale of Butuan. Judith Brosula is the first Filipino to be accredited by both BAC and International Badminton Federation.

Coach E classes set in Lipa City

THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL STARTS THE YEAR WITH ITS SATURday-only classes on Jan. 13 at the Mt. Malarayat gym in Lipa, Batangas. International Basketball Academy president Xavy Nunag said the success of the provincial clinics has encouraged the school founded by PBA champion coach Eric Altamirano to plan a second venue in Batangas City. "We want more kids to experience our personalized, scientific and effective Coach E training," said Nunag. He said aspiring basketball coaches in Southern Luzon are welcome to join coaching seminars by Altamirano and his roster of instructors. For inquiries, log-on to iba_phil@yahoo.com and www.ibaphil.net. For Xavier School classes, participants may call 723-0481.

68 fights in San Juan derby today

THE NEWLY FORMED SJC COCKERS CLUB PRESENTS A SPECIAL 4-COCK derby today at the San Juan Coliseum with 68 fights on tap and Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as sponsor. The group's prominent members include 2006 Bakbakan champion Bobby Doromal, Raymond Velayo, Rep. Danny Lagbas, Mayor Salvador Perez, Mario Espinosa of Masbate, Clyde Benabese, Emil Chua, P. Menez, Mayor Wawao Ramos, Ducar Dimayuga, Louie Cua, Totoy Haruta, Vogs Violago, Vince Cuyugan, Dennis Morales, Col del Mundo, Mario Garcia, Tony Manalansan, Osang dela Cruz, Sam Mendoza, Butchoy Olano, Lito Roque, Enjie Nas, Bobby Nicolas, Honey Yu and Anthony Lim. Eight derbies will be staged and at the end of the series.

Bautista, Gorres off for Roach training

REY "BOOM BOOM" BAUTISTA AND Z 'The Dream' Gorres, together with trainer Edito Villamor flies tonight to Los Angeles to hook up with renowned trainer Freddie Roach at the Wild Card Gym.

Bautista and Gorres will start training in the US for the March 4 "World Cup" to be held in Cebu where they challenge two World Boxing Organization reigning champions.

BAUTISTA

GORRES

The undefeated Bautista will take on WBO super bantam king Daniel Ponce De Leon, while Gorres will go up against WBO super fly champion Fernando Montiel.

Villamor, in an interview the other night in Borbon, Cebu, said that his two wards are in high spirits and are looking forward to a boot camp under Roach, who is more popularly known as the trainer of Filipino ring icon Manny Pacquiao.

Meanwhile, Golden Boy Promotions president Oscar De La Hoya is expected to fly to Cebu either late this month or early in February to bring with him the World Cup worth $500,000, which will be awarded to the winning country in the Philippines-Mexico boxing duel.

The priceless, one-of-a-kind, 15-pound, 18-karat Gold Cup is set with more than 15,000 diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds and other precious stones.

Mexico beat Thailand last year in the inaugural staging of the Boxing World Cup.

De la Hoya is expected to be accompanied to Cebu by GBP CEO Richard Schaefer and vice-president Eric Gomez, as well as international matchmaker non-pareil Sampson Lewkowicz.

The third world title bout in the World Cup will pit WBO bantam champ Jhonny Gonzales against the Philippines' Gerry Peñalosa. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*

PICHAY: I don't care who the players are.

TORRE: We hope it's an honest-to-goodness move . . . no sacred cows.

ESTIMO: Game-fixing is rampant.

CHESS GAME-FIXING

Grandmaster, 2 IMs, lady player among 7 suspects

By Marlon Bernardino, *Contributor*

A GRANDMASTER, TWO INTERNATIONAL MASters, two National Masters, one untitled player and a lady player are being suspected by chess officials of involvement in gaming-fixing, according to unimpeachable sources.

The INQUIRER is withholding the identities of the players until an investigation ordered by National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) president and Surigao Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay has been concluded.

The source said Pichay himself was shocked that the players, particularly the GM and the two IMs, were involved in game-fixing.

Pichay had announced on Saturday that "at least five players" were involved in game-fixing incidents in various tournaments last year.

"I don't care who these players are, even if they are our best players," Pichay said as he vowed to punish offenders.

This developed as prominent members of the chess community backed Pichay's investigation yesterday.

Asia's first GM, Eugene Torre, said the move is laudable as it would save the sport from being tainted.

"We are supporting Rep. Pichay's move to investigate game-fixing in chess," said Torre, also the founding president of NCFP and current head of the federation's players council. "We just hope that it would be an honest-to-goodness one, that no sacred cow would be spared."

"The move ... is a step in the right direction," said NCFP executive director Samuel Estimo. "Game-fixing is rampant in the highest levels of RP chess. Even our young players are being exposed to it."

The 55-year-old Torre said that he himself was a victim of game-fixing during the 1987 National Open, which served as a qualification tournament for the 1988 Chess Olympiad in Thesalonikki, Greece, where the Philippines went on to finish seventh—its best placing ever.

He said he felt bad that while he was fighting hard to win a match during that tournament, the players on the other boards were throwing their games and even laughing in the process.

Following an investigation, the now defunct Philippine Chess Federation, led by its president, the late Atty. Arturo "Art" Borjal, meted one-year suspensions on IM Petronio Roca, NMs Vince Alaan, Allan Sasot and Mirabeau Maga.

Roca, in a separate interview, insisted on his innocence in the incident. He, nevertheless, expressed his support to Pichay's move to cleanse the sport.

"It's a good move," he said in Filipino. "I just hope the investigation will be thorough and only the guilty are punished."

Meanwhile, eight men and five women will be sent to the forthcoming Asian Zonal 3.3 Chess Championship slated Jan. 10-19 in Vietnam's Kien Giang province.

The 15 are GMs Torre, Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. and Mark Paragua, IMs Wesley So, Ronald Dableo, Darwin Laylo, Oliver Dimakiling and IM candidate John Paul Gomez in the men's division and WIMs Beverly Mendoza, Sheerie Joy Lomibao, WNMs Kimberly Jane Cunanan, Catherine Pereña and Christy Lamiel Bernales.

Mexican champ vows to KO Pinoy

REIGNING WORLD BOXING ORGAnization (WBO) super flyweight champion Fernando Montiel of Mexico has vowed to stop Filipino challenger Z "The Dream" Gorres when they clash on March 4 in Cebu.

"I will make sure that Gorres does not finish the fight on his feet so I will not risk losing the title by bad decision," Montiel told Charles Winter of Box Noticias in a story carried by the world-renowned Philboxing.com.

Montiel (32-2-1, 24 KOs), who said that he would soon start training in Guadalajara, Mexico, has been left with no option but to defend his title in Cebu after Gorres' promoter SGG of Sammy Gello-ani outbid Bob Arum's Top Rank for the right to stage the bout.

Montiel, however, did not have kind words for his promoter Golden Boy Promotions, which he accused of favoring Gorres, who is also promoted by GBP.

"Because my contract is ending, Golden Boy has now withdrawn its support for me and has now sided with Gorres," Montiel said. "Proof of it is that this fight will be held in the Philippines."

Gerry Peñalosa is also challenging WBO bantam champ Jhonny Gonzales, but if the latter continues to show apprehension in facing Peñalosa, organizers might opt to replace him with WBO junior fly boss Hugo Cazares, who will defend against either Bert Batawang or Rodel Mayol.

Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor

COCKY KING: Fernando Montiel

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE
Monday, January 8, 2007

America naman ang maghahanap ng Idol!
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Iba Tayo
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Season 6
JANUARY 17

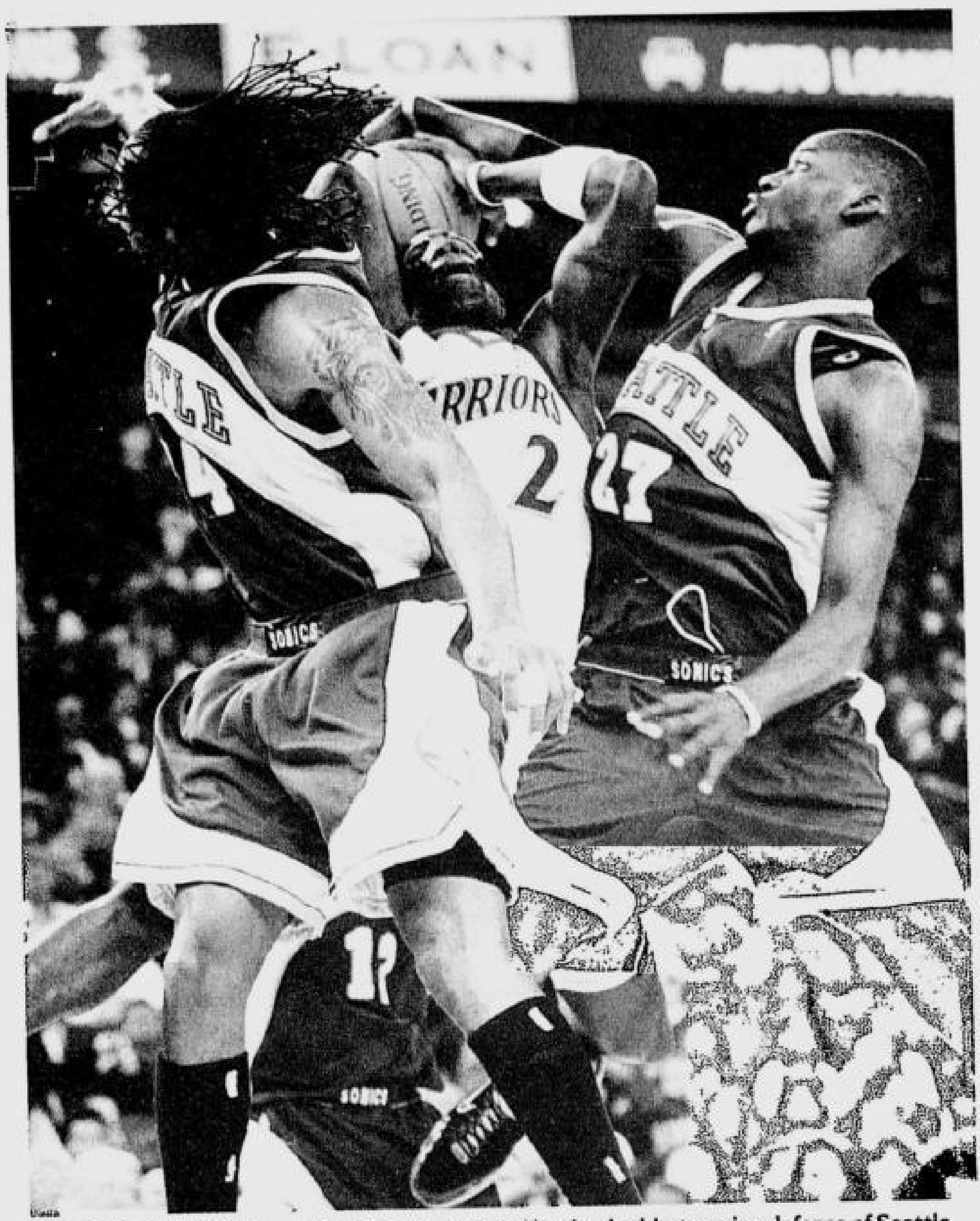
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				TNA Wrestling		Metro		Big News	Totoo TV		Global Shockers		Wow Maling-Mali Bytes	Sentro	Far Fetched		Araw-Araw Pamilya Sa Rosario	Simbang Gabi
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Noypi, Ikaw Ba 'To?		Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Princess Hours		Bandila	Real Pinoy Fighter	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		National Security				AXN Xtreme Macau	E Buzz	Ripley's Believe It or Not		The 4400 (Season 2)		Max Exposure (Season II)		Mondo Magic Singapore	30 Seconds To Fame	House (Season II)		Nip/ Tuck 2	
bTV		PBA TV 001	NBA Action	NBA Mavericks @ Lakers					NBA Greatest Game: L. Bird scores 60pts.				NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA Mavericks @ Lakers				
Cinema One		Asawa Ko Huwag Mong Agawin				Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan				Pinay Pie				Kahit Isang Saglit				Kapitan Ambo Outside De Kulambo	
Cinemax		Catch 22 (3:15PM)				The Assassins [illegible] (5:15PM)				Barbarians At The Gate				The Blob (1958)				Code Name Wolverine	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Living Golf/ Revealed Man Sai/ Art of Life		Your World Today	
Crime/Suspense		CIS Chronicles: Cold Case Files		Law and Order Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		City Confidential		Law and Order		Law and Order Special Victims Unit + 24		Revelations		The Unit		Threshold	
Discovery Channel		Sumo East And West		Beyond Tomorrow		Best of Discovery 2006				Wild Discovery		Tribal Life Bunlap		The Girl Who Lives In Dark		I Shouldn't Be Alive		Deadliest Catch	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse-works/ Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol	Lilo & Stitch	Emperor's New School/ I'll Be Home For Christmas	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Suite Life Of Zack And Cody		Buzz On Maggie/ Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN	Golf Hawaii	Extreme Programming Sports Max 2006/07		Cheerleading		Asian X Games '06 - Speed Climbing	Dakar Rally '07 Euromihos	College Football Bowl Game '07 GMAC Bowl						Sportscenter Asia	LPGA Golf Jamie Farr Owens Coming 4th Rd.				Sportscenter Asia
ETC	Friends	Beauty And The Geek		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Project Runway 2		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		America's Next Top Model 5		ET Weekend	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	The Biggest Loser 1		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Fox Report Sunday		Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Kapuso Movie Festival				Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika	StarStruck: The Next Level	Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15PM)		Lapit Ka, Isusumbong Kita		Saksi	
Hallmark Channel								McLeod's Daughters VI		Family Law III									
HBO			Born To Ride			City Hall				Invasion U.S.A.				Broken Flowers			HBO Central In January	When Trumpets Fade	
Hero TV	Mythic Warriors	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Ganbanger	Mythic Warriors	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Krusada Kontra Krimen		Japan Video Topics/ Arms		Japan Video Topics/ Arms		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/ Arms	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV		Bottomline		Afterburn		Cinema Tech	Evolver	Beat The Geeks	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Trigger Happy TV	Jack's Booth				The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Get Color	30 Minute Meals	Sweet Dreams	Rachel Ray		Smart Solutions	Embellish This	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Martha				Rachel Ray		Isaac		Radical Sabbatical	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines	MTV Feel The Music/ MTV Hits	Pimp My Ride	Pimp My Ride	MTV JUS		Final Fu	Why Can't I Be You	POP INC		MTV Music Remedy	My Own	MTV Made		Wild N Out	Wildboyz	Punk'd	Homewreckers	I Bet You Will	Barrio 19
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mobile MYX Top Picks		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXlog
National Geographic	Monkey Business	Inside Hong Kong's Big Bang		Triumph of Life The Survivors		ShowReel Asia 3: Kung Fu Monk		Top 5 - MegaCities: Hong Kong		National Geographic Specials Dial M		WOW! Wild Asia		Inside Speed Week		Triumph of Life 4 Billion Year War		ShowReel Asia 3: Strictly Asian Ballroom	
NBN					Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya?	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig Ng Bayan (Kapanalig Ng Bayan)				Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Kapatid Sa Hanapbuhay	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone/ The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous				Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	H3O Hahaha...Over!		News On Q	Sapulso		Irene	Overseas Fil Witness
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Buhay Pinoy Sa Telebisyon		TBA	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	Scare Tactics	GBB	Movie Monday				Newswatch Now	Go Negosyo		Kapihan
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Music Video		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports						Mosconi		Mosconi		Sagupaan		Raceworld		Gameplan		Sportsdesk	Gameplan		Sportsdesk
Star Movies				Hoosiers				Swept Away			Air Force Two			Dungeons & Dragons: The Wrath Of The Dragon God				The Devil's Own (10:50PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful	General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		Arrested Development	The Simpsons	Friends	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Life With Bonnie	Everybody Loves Raymond	The King Of Queens	Frasier	Desire Table For Three		Seinfeld	Life With Bonnie
Studio 23		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	The Amazing Race	Lost (8:15PM)		Alias		News Central	Rachel Ray (10:45PM)		Travel Time
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Clara Kaagapay N'yo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15PM)							

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

SPORTS

LeBron shines as Cavs trip Nets


GOLDEN STATE'S Michael Pietrus gets creamed by the double-teaming defense of Seattle SuperSonics' Chris Wilcox, (left) and Johan Petro (right). AP

CLEVELAND—LEBRON JAMES SCORED 19 POINTS and added a season-high 13 rebounds, helping the Cleveland Cavaliers cap their most successful week in nearly 14 years with a 96-91 victory over the New Jersey Nets on Saturday.

By beating San Antonio, Boston, Milwaukee and New Jersey since Tuesday, the Cavaliers have won four games in five nights for the first time since Feb. 2-6, 1993. It's just the streak they were looking for before departing on a seven-game, two-week road trip.

Larry Hughes and Drew Gooden scored 21 points apiece and Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 16 as the Cavaliers improved to 15-3 at home this season—and 26-3 since March 5 at Quicken Loans Arena.

Vince Carter and Mikki Moore had 18 points apiece and Richard Jefferson 17 for the Nets, who pulled within 93-91 on Jefferson's 3-pointer with 17 seconds left.

Gooden gave the Nets a chance to tie it by missing one of two free throws with 9.3 seconds to go. However, Carter misfired on a 3-pointer with 2.9 seconds remaining and Gooden sealed Cleveland's seventh win in eight games by hitting a pair of free throws in the final second.

Hawks 86, Clippers 74

At Atlanta, Joe Johnson scored 27 points, Zaza Pachulia added 22, and Atlanta downed the Los Angeles Clippers to snap an eight-game losing streak.

Atlanta won for the first time since a Dec. 15 victory at Memphis. It won at home for the first time since beating Charlotte on Nov. 29.

Elton Brand led Los Angeles with 26 points, including 12 in the first quarter, and Tim Thomas had 14.

The Clippers fell to 0-11 on the road when trailing after three quarters.

Pacers 100, Hornets 93

At Oklahoma City, Al Harrington and Stephen Jackson each scored 27 points and Jermaine O'Neal made two key layups in his first game since issuing a challenge to his Indiana teammates.

O'Neal hit back-to-back layups from the left block to break away from an 83-all tie and spark a 10-3 run that gave the Pacers control of the game in the final 4 minutes.

O'Neal finished with 22 points in his first game since calling the Pacers "a very average team" and suggesting that he and the team should go "separate ways" at the end of the season "if I can't take this team to another level."

Desmond Mason scored 28 points for New Orleans.

Bulls 106, Pistons 89

At Chicago, Luol Deng scored 30, Ben Wallace finished with 12 points and 14 rebounds in his first game against his former team, and Chicago beat Detroit.

Ben Gordon scored 23 and Andres Nocioni added 21 points for Chicago.

It was a good ending to a tough week for the Bulls, who lost 97-96 to Phoenix on Leandro Barbosa's 3-pointer with 1.5 seconds left on Tuesday and fell 91-86 at New Jersey on Friday after scoring the first 18 points. Chicago had dropped 14 of 16 overall to the Pistons and 12 straight at home.

Jazz 96, Nuggets 84

At Denver, Deron Williams tied a career high with 28 points and Carlos Boozer shrugged off a slow start to finish with 24 for Utah's win over Denver.

Williams also had 12 assists and Boozer grabbed 12 rebounds. The Jazz are now 21-5 when Boozer records a double-double.

Utah saw a 19-point lead in the first half cut to 68-67 with 9:30 remaining in the game. However, the Jazz went on a 10-0 run to restore some breathing room and send the Nuggets to their season-high fifth straight loss.

Warriors 108, SuperSonics 104

At Oakland, California, Baron Davis had 22 points and 11 assists to lead Golden State to its sixth straight home win.

Davis helped Golden State overcome 38 points from Ray Allen and 16 missed free throws to hand Seattle its 11th straight road loss.

Allen's seventh 3-pointer tied the game at 103 with 2:13 to play. Both teams traded misses before Davis rebounded an errant trey from Monta Ellis, dribbled out from under the basket and fed Matt Barnes for the go-ahead with 1:05 left.

Blazers 110, Kings 105, OT

At Sacramento, California, Zach Randolph had 32 points and 15 rebounds for Portland, which tied Sacramento at the buzzer in regulation and went on to win in overtime.

Trailing 95-93, Portland rookie Brandon Roy forced overtime with a 15-foot, fallaway jumper over John Salmons. *AP*

- NBA TODAY ON BASKETBALL TV

10:30 a.m.—Dallas vs. LA Lakers (replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

Brown back in Allen-less Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA—LARRY BROWN WAS REhired by the Philadelphia 76ers as executive vice president on Saturday, stoking speculation that he'll eventually replace coach Maurice Cheeks and revive one of the worst teams in the NBA.

And this time, Brown won't have to clash with Allen Iverson.

Nearly three weeks after Philadelphia traded away the player who tormented him during much of his six years as their coach, Brown is back at a familiar stop in his vagabond career. He will assist team president Billy King and the basketball operations department, and work on special projects.

"Billy came to me and asked if I would be interested in getting involved with the organization again," Brown said. "Obviously, Billy has been a close friend for more than 20 years and I respect his work immensely. I am flattered that he asked me. I was very excited about the opportunity of working with him again and doing whatever I can to help him bring a winner to this city, a city that my family and I love."

The move was expected after Philadelphia traded Iverson to the Denver Nuggets last month. The day after the deal, King said he was talking to Brown about the possibility of rejoining the franchise he coached to the 2001 NBA finals.

"Larry Brown has been a friend and mentor to me for many years and his knowledge of the game of basketball is unparalleled," King said. "Adding his basketball knowledge to the existing staff gives us a valuable resource."

One of the NBA's most well-traveled coaches, Brown has been King's mentor since he hired him as an assistant coach in Indiana. When Brown came to Philadelphia in 1997, he brought King with him as vice president of basketball administration. King became team president after Brown resigned in 2003. *AP*

A little Ali, a little M'weather help Peter

HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA—SAMUEL PEter beat James Toney for the second time in three months Saturday, getting a unanimous decision in a WBC heavyweight elimination bout and perhaps the chance to fight Oleg Maskaev for a championship.

Nigerian-born Peter (28-1, 22 knockouts) was ahead on two cards by scores of 118-110; he led the other card 119-108.

"You saw me tonight," Peter said. "I taunted him. I gave him the Muhammad Ali shuffle, and a little Floyd Mayweather, too. You saw what I did to him tonight. This was my best fight."

When it was over, the fighters seemed to disagree again on the outcome, with Toney raising his right fist in victory and Peter dancing around his half of the ring.

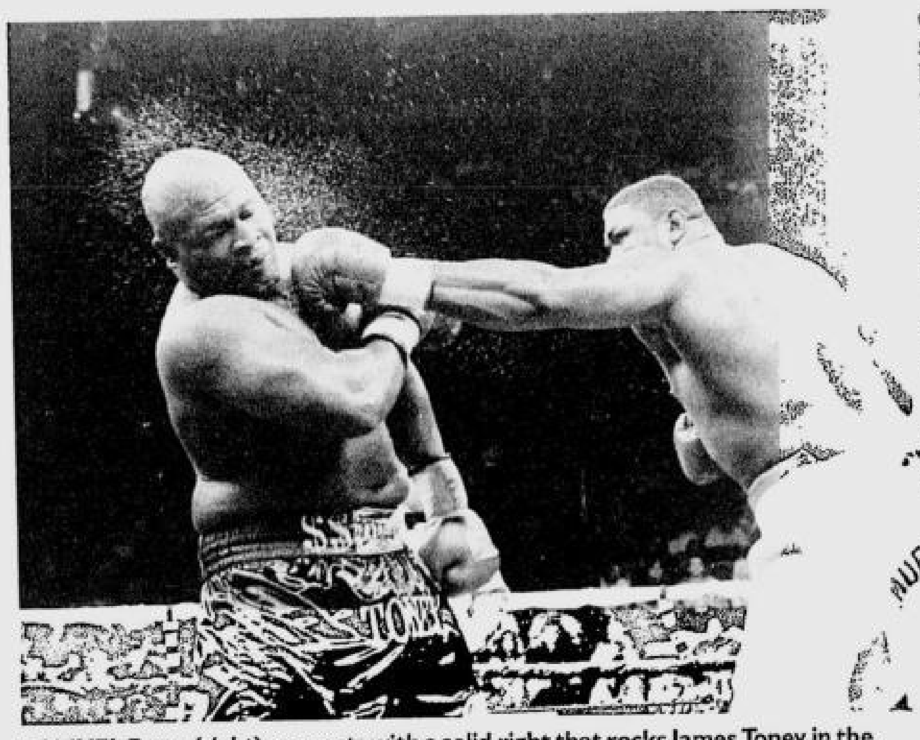
But deep down, Toney (69-6-3, 43 KOs) probably couldn't have believed that he would emerge the winner.

"First time, I knew I beat him," Peter said. "I won the first fight."

He took this one, too.

When the fighters last met in Los Angeles on Sept. 2, both men claimed to have won convincingly. And observers, too, couldn't agree on the real winner.

Peter was the winner by 116-111 margins on two judges' cards that night, but Toney was ahead 115-112 on the third card—and many ringside viewers also thought he won the bout. So the WBC intervened and, by a vote of its board of governors, ordered a rematch with the caveat that the winner would get a title shot.


SAMUEL Peter (right) connects with a solid right that rocks James Toney in the 11th round of their heavyweight boxing bout. Peter beat Toney for the second time in three months. AP

The 26-year-old Peter's approach was simple: He absorbed Toney's best shots, while keeping the 38-year-old former IBF middleweight, super middleweight and cruiserweight champion near the ropes as much as he could.

Peter had the best of the early going, including a knockdown 20 seconds into the second round—the first time Toney had been knocked down since 1994, when Roy Jones Jr. did it in an easy win over the then-super middleweight.

"I slipped," Toney said. "I didn't go down. I feel I won the fight but it's all good. We'll fight another fight... This guy is supposed to be a hell of a puncher, but he couldn't knock me out."

Toney, with his left eye closing, rallied a bit in the next two rounds. The fourth ended with Toney against the ropes, yet both fighters got in several shots in the closing seconds as photographers and others sitting immediately outside the ring shielded themselves from blasts of sweat being knocked off both men's bodies.

By the ninth round, knowing he was ahead on the cards, Peter began throwing jabs and seeming like he was willing to conserve energy and avoid any knockout tries that Toney could muster. And he was never in trouble the rest of the way.

"I'm not the best yet," Toney said. "The champions have the belts."

If all goes according to the WBC's plan, Peter may get a chance at the heavyweight belt held by Maskaev (34-5). *AP*

Denver Broncos pay respects to slain teammate

FORT WORTH, TEXAS—THOUSANDS of friends, family members, teammates and fans attended the funeral for charismatic Denver Broncos cornerback Darrent Williams on Saturday, five days after he was killed in a drive-by shooting.

"I've never seen a little man with so much heart and so much fire," Broncos linebacker Al Wilson said at the three-hour service at Great Commission Baptist Church.

When Williams' longtime girlfriend, Tierria Leonard, walked past his open casket, Williams' 7-year-old son, Darius, cried uncontrollably just as he had at the memorial service on Friday, when he wore a T-shirt that read, "I love you Daddy."

Williams is also survived by a 4-year-old daughter, Jaelyn.

Broncos running back Tatum Bell, who played with Williams at Oklahoma State University, broke down as he spoke.

"I'm just glad D was in my life," he said through sobs as Wilson comforted him by his side.

The Broncos flew in for the funeral on a chartered flight that did not include wide receiver Javon Walker, who was with Williams when he was killed.

"Javon is struggling," coach Mike Shanahan said. *AP*

Vijay takes Mercedes Benz driver's seat

KAPALUA, HAWAII—VIJAY SINGH LOOKS AS if he's tired of finishing second at Kapalua.

Having finished a combined four shots behind Stuart Appleby the last three years, Singh seized control of the Mercedes Benz Championship in more blustery conditions Saturday, shooting a 3-under 70 to take a three-shot lead over Adam Scott and Trevor Immelman.

Singh has never finished out of the top 10 since this winners-only tournament moved to the Plantation Course at Kapalua in 1999, but luck has never been on his side. The way he has played for three rounds, he might not need much.

The 43-year-old Fijian has been in control of all aspects of his game and was at 11-under 208, a strong score considering trade winds that have gusted up to 35 mph (56 kph) all week.

Scott made birdie on five of his last seven holes for a 69 and joined Immelman at 211.

Along with getting his year off to a great start, Singh is poised to make history at the PGA Tour's season opener. A victory would be his 18th since turning 40, breaking the record held by Sam Snead.

"My desire is to win as many as possible," Singh said.

Will MacKenzie (73) and JB Holmes (71) each recovered from shaky moments to stay in the mix at 212.

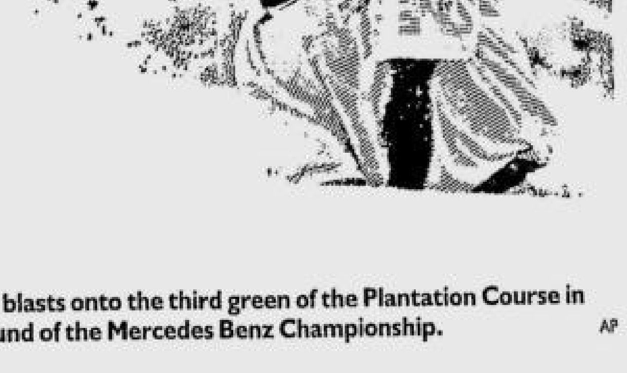
Except for the scenery and their positions atop the leaderboard, Singh and Scott have made the first PGA Tour event of 2007 look a lot like last year's finale.

Scott and Singh also played in the final group two months ago at the season-ending Tour Championship, but it was Scott who had the three-shot lead at East Lake, and he closed with a 66 for a three-shot victory.

Immelman had a chance to get into the final group until his eagle putt on the 18th just turned away. The South African figures he will need the lowest round of the tournament—no one has been better than 68 all week—to catch Singh.

"I'll need a special day tomorrow," Immelman said. "You don't expect him to give it away. But I've come from three behind before and won. All I can do is play my best golf and see what happens."

Appleby's bid to become the fourth player to win a PGA Tour event four straight times is all but over. *AP*


VIJAY Singh blasts onto the third green of the Plantation Course in the third round of the Mercedes Benz Championship. AP

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Farm sector growth seen at 4.7-5% in '06

Poor 4th quarter performance due to typhoons

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE COUNTRY'S AGRICULTURE sector was estimated to have grown by 4.7 to 5 percent in 2006 despite the damaging effects of the consecutive typhoons in the third and fourth quarters.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said in an interview that the sector's growth would be within this range though the fourth-quarter results, which are still being finalized, have not been very good due to the typhoons.

"Full year growth in 2006 will not be lower than 4 percent. This is within government's target," Yap said in an interview.

He noted that the agriculture sector contributed significantly to the economic growth in the first nine months of 2006 and only slowed in the fourth quarter. He gave credit to the programs instituted by his predecessor, Domingo Panganiban, who lobbied for the early release of irrigation funds worth P2 billion in the first quarter.

"Early harvests done by farmers during the third quarter saved a lot for the sector, but the export-oriented seaweed

FARM/ B4

IN THIS ISSUE

Gov't expects P104B from nontax revenues /B4

PNB success story author to take over RCBC helm /B6

141 cases vs tax cheats filed in '06

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS REPORTed that the government has filed 141 cases on tax evasion, smuggling and corruption in 2006 as it aims to plug revenue leakages arising from these illegal activities.

Of the cases, 70 were tax evasion and filed under the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. There were 28 anti-smuggling cases filed by the Bureau of Customs under its Run After the Smugglers (RATS) program and 43 cases of corruption filed by the DOF's Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS).

RIPS is the unit of the DOF tasked with conducting lifestyle checks among suspected corrupt employees and officials of the BIR and the BOC.

The RATE, RATS and RIPS were established in 2005 as a move to strengthen the government's anti-corruption drive and to discourage the public from evading the payment of proper taxes and duties.

But while many cases have been filed, the success of the programs is not yet complete as prosecutors have yet to win a conviction. Of the 141 cases filed last year, some are still pending in courts and a few were dismissed.

The frequency of the filing of cases has also slowed down. When the programs were first implemented in 2005, the BIR, BOC and RIPS were each tasked to file at least one case a week.

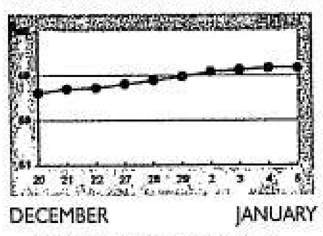
But the DOF said the slowdown only meant that the prosecuting agencies were focused on quality rather than quantity of cases filed.

The RATE and RATS also used to cater to high-profile tax evaders and smugglers, but the programs now mostly charge lower-profile

141 CASES/ B4

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



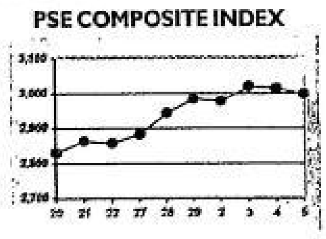
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱48.84 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 5, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Upbeat trading seen

TRADING IS EXPECTED TO BE UPBEAT THIS week as investors keep buying ahead of a good 2007, analysts said.

"This week should be bullish. It's a seasonal trend because it's positioning for the rest of the year," said Joseph Roxas, president at Eagle Equities Inc.

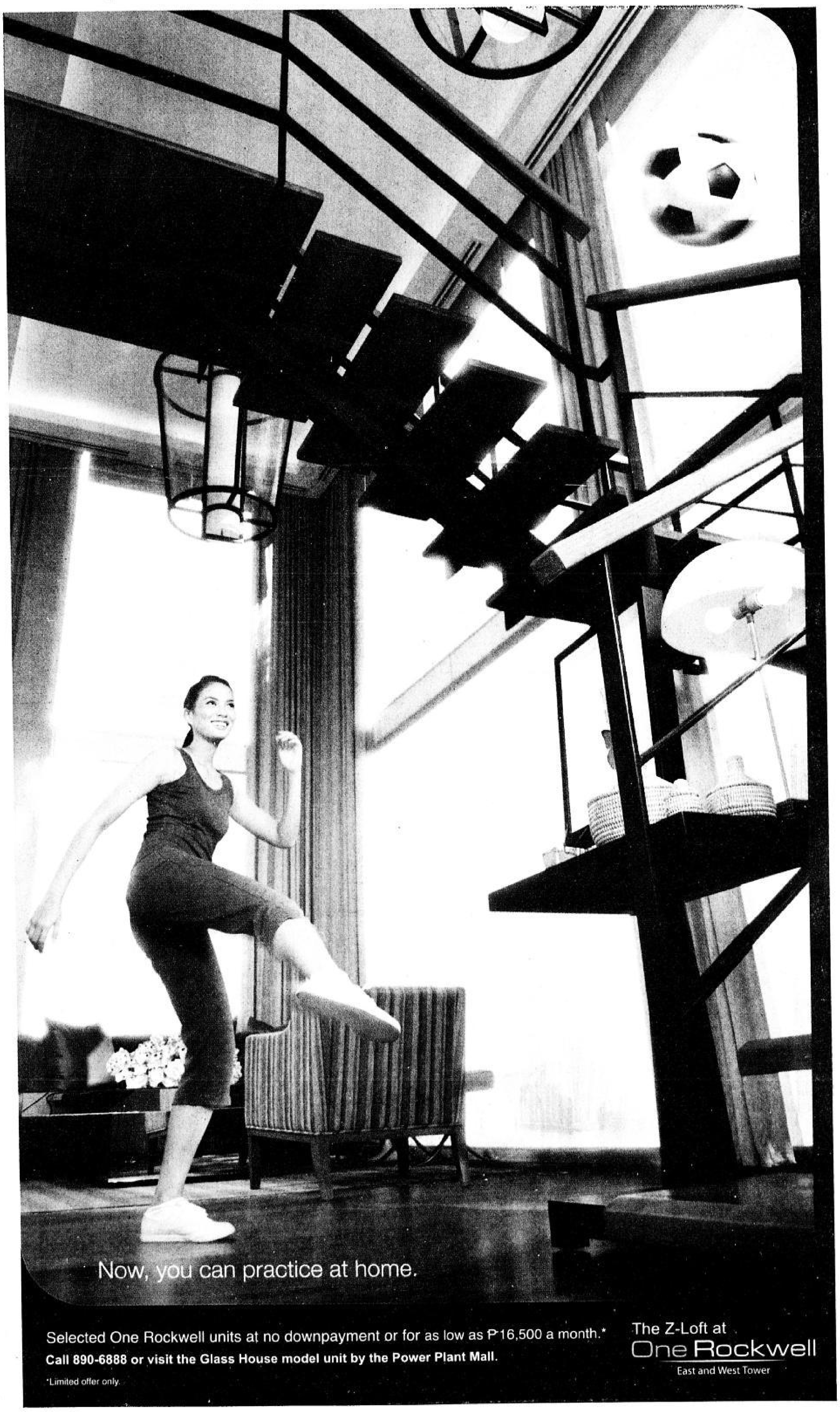
BPI Trade Online said the dips last week were normal after the market set new highs. "We can expect current trading patterns to continue. Corrections signaling renewed accumulation, with new index highs setting increasingly higher resistance," BPI Trade said in a note to clients.

Paul Joseph Garcia, chief investment officer at ING Investment Management, said investors were also "putting their cash to work" by buying stocks with expected robust earnings that, in turn, would keep the market buoyant in the next few trading days.

Good news on the economic front will also help keep investor sentiment upbeat. The government reported last week that consumer prices rose 4.3 percent year-on-year in December, the slowest pace in almost three years, as the peso continued to strengthen and world oil prices eased.

What would also brighten prospects for companies are lower interest rates, which tend to help companies lower borrowing costs for their expansion needs.

UPBEAT/ B2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Assumptions, projections and targets

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN economists like me are asked about our "fearless forecasts" for the economy, for the year that is just starting. In particular, we are asked to provide the expected numerical values for key indicators of economic performance. It's as if we are in possession of special crystal balls that give us an unusual capability to foretell the economic future.

As our title above suggests, there are really three categories of such numerical forecasts that the country's economic managers need to make in the course of such crystal ball-gazing.

Exogenous variables

First are crucial economic variables that are conditioned by external market forces, and therefore beyond the control of Filipinos. For these variables, we can only make starting assumptions about their values, based on what the experts anticipate. These include the price of crude oil, global interest rates as represented by the London Inter-Bank Offer Rate (Libor), and economic variables (GDP growth, inflation rate, currency performance) of our major economic partners like the US, Japan, Europe, and increasingly, China.

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

We explained the far-reaching impact of oil prices on our domestic economy in a recent column (NFL, 11-20-06). In drawing up its proposed 2007 budget, the government has assumed that crude oil price will be in the range of $64-67 a barrel, somewhat higher than the $62-64 assumed for 2006.

Changes in the Libor influence changes in our own domestic interest rates, and therefore the cost of doing business. They also have a profound impact on the government's fiscal position through the cost of public foreign borrowings. The assumed 2007 Libor (6-month rate) is 5.6 percent, slightly higher than the 5.4 percent assumed last year.

Educated guesses

Projections and/or targets are made for those economic variables that we do have some measure of control or influence over. These include economic growth (GDP/GNP growth rates), price increases (inflation rate), domestic interest rate as indicated by the 91-day treasury bill rate, export and import levels, government revenues (including tax and nontax revenues), and so on.

Strictly speaking, projections are educated guesses on what the values of these variables will be, based on assumptions made on exogenous variables, and best available data—and projections thereon—on the various factors influencing these variables (including economic performance of our trade and investment partners abroad). While projections represent the expected values for these variables, targets are the desired values for these variables that we wish to attain, and will work to achieve. The two will not always be the same, as projections imply a more passive outcome, while targets entail undertaking deliberate efforts to attain them and can therefore be more ambitious.

The government is targeting 5.7-6.5 percent GDP growth this year, and 6-6.9 percent GNP growth, indicating continued expectation of brisk growth in remittances from abroad. It also targets inflation to be in the 4.3-4.8 percent range, representing further improvement on the 6.2-percent average attained in 2006.

Revenue targets

One particularly contentious target is the one concerning government revenues. At the close of 2006, preliminary data indicate that the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) is falling short of its collection target (P675.4 billion) by around P30 billion, while the Bureau of Customs (BOC) is exceeding its (P140.4 billion) by about P5 billion.

But BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag laments that the revenue target that is defined for him by the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) hinges on assumptions on variables beyond BIR's control. Prominent among these is the interest rate—which affects the level of taxes collected on interest earnings of government securities like T-bills—and the amount of such T-bills actually issued by the government. This past year, both have been substantially lower than earlier assumed.

According to analysis by the Department of Finance (DOF), nonrealization of the assumed interest rate—pegged by the government in early 2006 at 7.5-8.5 percent, but ending up instead at 6.4-6.5 percent—and the much lower-than-projected government deficit that necessitated less T-bill issuances, accounted for about half (P16 billion) of the BIR's P30-billion shortfall. Taxes collected on earnings of bank deposits also fell short by another P4 billion due to lower interest and volume of deposits realized. One might expect that the lower interest rate would have led to greater investment and higher GDP, and therefore more taxable incomes, elsewhere in the economy. But the DOF analysis also shows that about P6 billion of the revenue shortfall was due to lower-than-projected GDP growth—again something beyond the BIR's control. That investment actually fell during the year despite a lower interest rate means non-economic factors—obviously political ones—came into play that led to this further discrepancy.

In short, revenue targeting can be an extremely complex exercise, let alone targeting the rest of the indicators of economic performance. I commiserate with our economic managers; they hold an often thankless job—for this and many other reasons.

Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Jan. 5, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.2	7.3	7.1	7.3	47,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	45	45	44	45	586,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	64.5	65	64	64.5	1,153,600
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.46	0.47	0.46	0.46	3,500,000
Equitable Pci Bank Inc.	82	82	81.5	81.5	1,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51	52	50	52	1,616,200
Philippine National Bank	45.5	45.5	45	45	39,100
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	15,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	24	24	23.5	23.75	171,700
Security Bank Corp.	66	67	66	67	88,400
Union Bank of the Phil.	48.5	49.5	48.5	49	97,400
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Air Kimeng Fin. Corp.	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	21,000
Bankard Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.77	0.77	120,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	76,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1625	1625	1625	1625	80
Pci Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	289,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	287.5	290	287.5	290	1,390
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2020	2020	2020	2020	160
Ivantage Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.66	1,091,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
Pnoc Energy Dev. Corp.	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	49,214,000
First Gen Corp.	55.5	55.5	55.5	55.5	164,800
First Phil Hldgs Corp	68	70	67.5	70	693,000
Manila Electric Co. A	59.5	59.5	58	58.5	200,500
Manila Electric Co. B	59	59.5	58	59	1,574,100
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.3	9.4	9.2	9.3	2,820,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.05	4.05	5,755,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	234,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	31,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	21,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	44	44	43	43	1,079,100
Pancake House Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	5,000
Rfm Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	155,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.75	2.8	2.75	2.8	346,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	64	64.5	91,600
San Miguel Corp. B	75.5	76	75	75	774,600
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.16	2.2	1,056,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19	19	18.75	18.75	1,038,700
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.24	1.26	1.18	1.26	80,358,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.25	3.4	3.25	3.35	1,692,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.7	81,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6	6	6	6	4,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4.25	4.25	4.2	4.2	210,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies, Inc	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.6	1,749,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	20,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.69	17,170,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.21	0.225	0.21	0.22	18,100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	14,000,000
Ayala Corp.	560	565	550	560	106,670
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.63	0.63	490,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	7.3	7.8	7.2	7.8	1,465,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0575	0.065	0.0575	0.0625	84,800,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3	3	2.95	2.95	855,000
Apc Group Inc.	0.37	0.39	0.37	0.38	25,620,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.01	33,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	660,000
Atn Holdings Inc.	1.78	2	1.68	2	273,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp	3.15	3.2	3.1	3.2	92,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.7	2.75	2.55	2.7	26,679,000
Dmci Holdings Inc.	6.3	6.5	6.3	6.5	2,725,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.95	4.25	3.9	4.25	3,264,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	1,990,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.98	2.06	1.98	1.98	430,000
J.G. Summit Holdings, Inc	10.25	11	10.25	11	630,300
Keppel Holdings	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	50,000
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	2,430,000
Magnum Holdings, Inc	3.85	4.2	3.85	4.05	441,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.58	1.64	1.58	1.62	3,328,000
Pacifica	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	2,400,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.195	0.2	0.195	0.2	870,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	40,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.17	0.165	0.165	8,490,000
Sm Investments Corp.	320	320	315	320	415,140
South China Resources Inc	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.02	110,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	30,000
Uniol Res. & Holdings Co	0.29	0.32	0.29	0.31	5,820,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.135	860,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	16	16	15.75	15.75	118,687,300
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.45	0.45	190,000
Belle Corp.	1.16	1.22	1.16	1.18	17,303,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.64	1.7	1.64	1.68	156,000
Cityland Development Corp	1.66	1.68	1.66	1.68	50,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.43	0.47	0.43	0.47	24,190,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	326,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.32	1,860,000
Eib Realty Developers Inc	0.2	0.22	0.2	0.22	700,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.56	0.58	0.56	0.57	22,370,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.56	1.6	1.56	1.58	783,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	2,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.68	1.72	1.66	1.72	27,878,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	32,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.46	0.5	0.45	0.5	11,700,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.67	0.73	0.67	0.69	5,430,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5.5	5.8	5.5	5.6	1,586,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	110,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.75	16	15.75	15.75	2,318,300
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.64	0.7	0.64	0.7	20,850,000
Sm Development Corp.	2.95	3.25	2.95	3.1	12,279,000
Sm Prime Holdings Inc.	11.75	12	11.5	11.75	8,953,600
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	300,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.1	0.1	9,000,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	19.5	19.75	19.5	19.5	22,100
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp	1	1	1	1	30,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	2.08	2.1	1.98	2.02	30,116,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1270	1275	1260	1260	50,380
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.9	6.9	6.7	6.9	1,666,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2520	2525	2500	2505	111,520
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	21,780,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	1,000,000
Ionics Inc.	2.2	2.24	2.2	2.24	255,000
Ipvg Corp.	3.7	3.95	3.7	3.95	1,276,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	18,400,000
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	165,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.04	3	2.04	2.95	5,513,000
Philweb Corp.	0.031	0.035	0.031	0.034	1,203,600,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.36	1.42	1.36	1.42	671,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	21	21.75	21	21.75	327,100
Keppel Phils. Marine, Inc	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	70,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.98	2	1.98	2	1,463,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	25,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	200,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	3,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.12	2.14	2.1	2.1	356,000
Paxys Inc.	19.25	19.25	19.25	19.25	34,500
Philippine Seven Corp.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	10,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.7	178,000
Apex Mining Co., Inc B	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.8	391,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	146,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.6	9.6	9.4	9.6	1,579,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	5,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	20,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.26	23,660,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.27	1,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	61,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	7,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.014	627,000,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.9	4	3.9	3.95	7,141,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.25	18.25	18	18	220,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.8	0.8	0.78	0.78	2,400,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.56	1.56	1.5	1.5	2,320,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	1,990,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	288,900,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	70,100,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.14	1.16	1.12	1.12	1,104,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.14	1.18	1.14	1.14	363,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	9.8	10	9.7	10	163,000

CURRENCIES

January 5, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.764117	1.000000	48.8570
Japan	Yen	0.006420	0.008402	0.4105
United Kingdom	Pound	1.484679	1.943000	94.9292
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098112	0.128399	6.2732
Switzerland	Franc	0.619823	0.811162	39.6309
Canada	Dollar	0.649208	0.849618	41.5098
Singapore	Dollar	0.497472	0.651042	31.8080
Australia	Dollar	0.599590	0.784683	38.3373
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.026782	2.652450	129.5907
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.203759	0.266660	13.0282
Brunei	Dollar	0.495858	0.648929	31.7047
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000111	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021464	0.028090	1.3724
UAE	Dirham	0.208836	0.272279	13.3055
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.308700	63.9392
Korea	Won	0.000810	0.001074	0.0525
China	Yuan**	0.097851	0.128057	6.2565
Denmark	Kroner	0.134159	0.175574	8.5780
India	Rupee	0.017303	0.022645	1.1064
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217079	0.284091	13.8798
Mexico	New Peso	0.070199	0.091870	4.4885
New Zealand	Dollar	0.532969	0.697496	34.0776
South Africa	Rand	0.107992	0.141329	6.9049

Upbeat . . .

From page B1

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas expects monetary policy to be more flexible this year in view of a slowdown in inflation in 2006.

Analysts expect the BSP to cut its overnight rates—currently at 7.5 percent for overnight borrowing and 9.75 percent for overnight lending—by at least half a percentage point.

Prospects for the energy sector are also upbeat, according to online brokerage firm 2Trade Asia.com, with the privatization of assets held by state-run National Power Corp. (Napocor) expected to contribute about $4-$5 billion to the government's coffers.

The amount is seen coming from the sale of generating companies (gencos) and bids for the 25-year concession contract of National Transmission Corp. (Transco) set this month. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

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SM NORTH EDSA Car Park Plaza 453-3326
V MALL Greenhills, San Juan Bridgeway fronting Concorde 727-4921
SM FAIRVIEW Basement 418-7540
CEBU 417-8286

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,100,000	1,000,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	-	1,050,000
Anvaya Cove Beach and Nature Club	Please Call	-
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	60,000	50,000
Camp John Hay	-	300,000
Canlubang	500,000	425,000
Capitol Hills	40,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,600,000	1,400,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	100,000
Club Filipino	100,000	90,000
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	100,000	-
Forest Hills "B"	150,000	-
Forest Hills "C"	190,000	-
Luisita Golf "A"	350,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	190,000	150,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	200,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	12,500,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	-	11,600,000
Manila Polo	2,750,000	2,600,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	300,000	-
Manila Southwoods "B"	750,000	630,000
Manila Yacht Club	250,000	-
Mimosa (Individual)	230,000	200,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	650,000	550,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	180,000	-
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	170,000	140,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	310,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "C"	350,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	150,000	125,000
Spa & Lodge	500,000	480,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,500,000	1,300,000
Sta. Elena "B"	2,140,000	1,800,000
Sherwood "C"	70,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	320,000	290,000
Tagaytay Highlands	Please Call	600,000
Tagaytay Midlands	650,000	620,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	90,000	-
Valley Golf	200,000	180,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	-	6,900,000

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/1,200,000*	1,050,000
Alta Vista A/B*/Corp.**	-	300,000/Pls. Call*/Pls Call**
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Camp John Hay	Pls. Call	Pls Call*
Canlubang Golf	-	420,000
Canyon Woods	100,000	-
Capitol Hills	50,000	-
Cebu Country Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Celebrity Sports	Pls. Call	90,000
Club Filipino	90,000	-
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	280,000*/350,000**	Pls. Call*
Eastridge A/B*	Pls. Call	-
Evercrest	65,000	-
Fairways & Bluewater	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	90,000/Pls. Call*	120,000*
Luisita Golf	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	12,000,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,800,000
Manila Polo	2,900,000	2,700,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	Pls. Call*	-
Makati Sports Club A	200,000	-
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	280,000	-
Metropolitan Club A/B*	180,000	-
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	Pls. Call	Pls. Call/550,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	180,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	160,000/Pls. Call*/350,000**	150,000/300,000*
Punta Fuego	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Quezon City Sports Club	150,000	Pls. Call
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	80,000/170,000*/250,000**	Pls. Call*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Royale Tagaytay CC	65,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	75,000/150,000**	100,000*
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	-	1,300,000
Subic Golf	190,000	-
Summit Point A	300,000	-
The Palms Country Club	400,000	330,000
Country Club at Tagaytay Highlands	320,000	-
Tagaytay Highlands	650,000	620,000
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls. Call	600,000
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Tower Club A/B*	150,000/180,000*	-
Valley Golf	220,000	-
Valle Verde Ind.	Pls. Call	-
Wack Wack Golf	Pls. Call	Pls. Call

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SELLING		BUYING	
ALABANG A	1.1M	ALABANG B	1.2M
CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	500K	BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	540K
CELEBRITY SPORTS CLUB	100K	CEBU COUNTRY CLUB	1.2M
EAGLERIDGE B	260K	CLUB FILIPINO	90K
LUISITA GOLF	300K	EAGLERIDGE B	PLS. CALL
MANILA POLO CLUB	2.650M	EAGLERIDGE C	330K
MANILA SOUTHWOODS B	680K	MANILA GOLF CORP.	12.4M
MANILA YACHT CLUB	250K	MANILA GOLF IND.	11.5M
METROCLUB A	130K	MANILA POLO CLUB	2.7M
METROCLUB B	170K	MANILA SOUTHWOODS B	PLS. CALL
MIMOSA C-3	600K	MIMOSA C3	PLS. CALL
MT. MALARAYAT A	200K	MIMOSA IND.	200K
MT. MALARAYAT C	380K	ORCHARD A	160K
PUERTO AZUL	PLS. CALL	SHERWOOD HILLS B	PLS. CALL
ORCHARD B	310K	SPA & LODGE	450K
ORCHARD C	350K	STA. ELENA A	1.4M
QUEZON CITY SPORTS	150K	STA. ELENA B	1.8M
SPLENDIDO	200K	TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	600K
STA. ELENA A	PLS. CALL	TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS GOLF	620K
THE PALMS	380K	VALLE VERDE	90K
VALLE VERDE CORP.	300K	VALLEY GOLF	200K
WACK WACK	PLS. CALL	WACK WACK	7.0M

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UCPB to sell thrift bank, stockbrokerage subsidiaries

Wants to speed up return to profitability

By Doris C. Dumlao

UNITED COCONUT PLANTERS BANK plans to sell its thrift bank and stockbrokerage subsidiaries as part of an overall strategy to speed up the sequestered bank's financial turnaround.

In a recent interview, UCPB president Jose Querubin said that on top of the planned disposal of about P20 billion in bad assets this year, the bank would streamline its subsidiaries and branches to boost revenue stream as well as build up its low-cost deposit base to take up the slack in loan demand.

UCPB earlier merged two bank subsidiaries—UCPB Savings Bank and UCPB Rural Bank—creating the country's 10th biggest thrift bank with P3.67 billion in assets and 34 branches.

"That's capitalized at about P1.5 billion and if we sell at 1.5 times book (value), then we can earn P750 million," Querubin said.

UCPB Savings Bank, the surviving entity, ranks 5th highest in return on equity within the thrift bank industry at 10.65 percent, 9th highest in terms of total deposits with P2.16 billion and 10th highest in total loans with P2.08 billion.

The thrift bank is no stranger to mergers. UCPB Savings Bank is the product of the merger of four thrift banks in 1989 while UCPB Rural Bank emerged out of the merger of 12 rural banks in 1991.

"We're looking at rationalizing other subsidiaries, not just the savings bank," Querubin said, noting that the bank had already pulled out of the property business by unloading the assets of its property subsidiary.

Despite the reinvigorated stock market, Querubin added that the bank would likewise sell its stock brokerage unit UCPB Securities.

"We also have a leasing company but we may have to keep that because the bank itself can't do leasing, so that one, I think, has to stay," Querubin said.

He said UCPB would rationalize even its branch network to make sure that the ones that are not profitable would be relocated to more viable areas.

Excluding the network of its thrift bank subsidiary, UCPB has 178 branches, 101 of which are in Metro Manila.

Another strategy now paying off is the build-up of low-cost deposit base or the current account and savings accounts (Casa). The bank's Casa is now hitting the highest levels in the bank's history with an average daily balance of about P27.5 billion or about 35 percent of its total deposit base.

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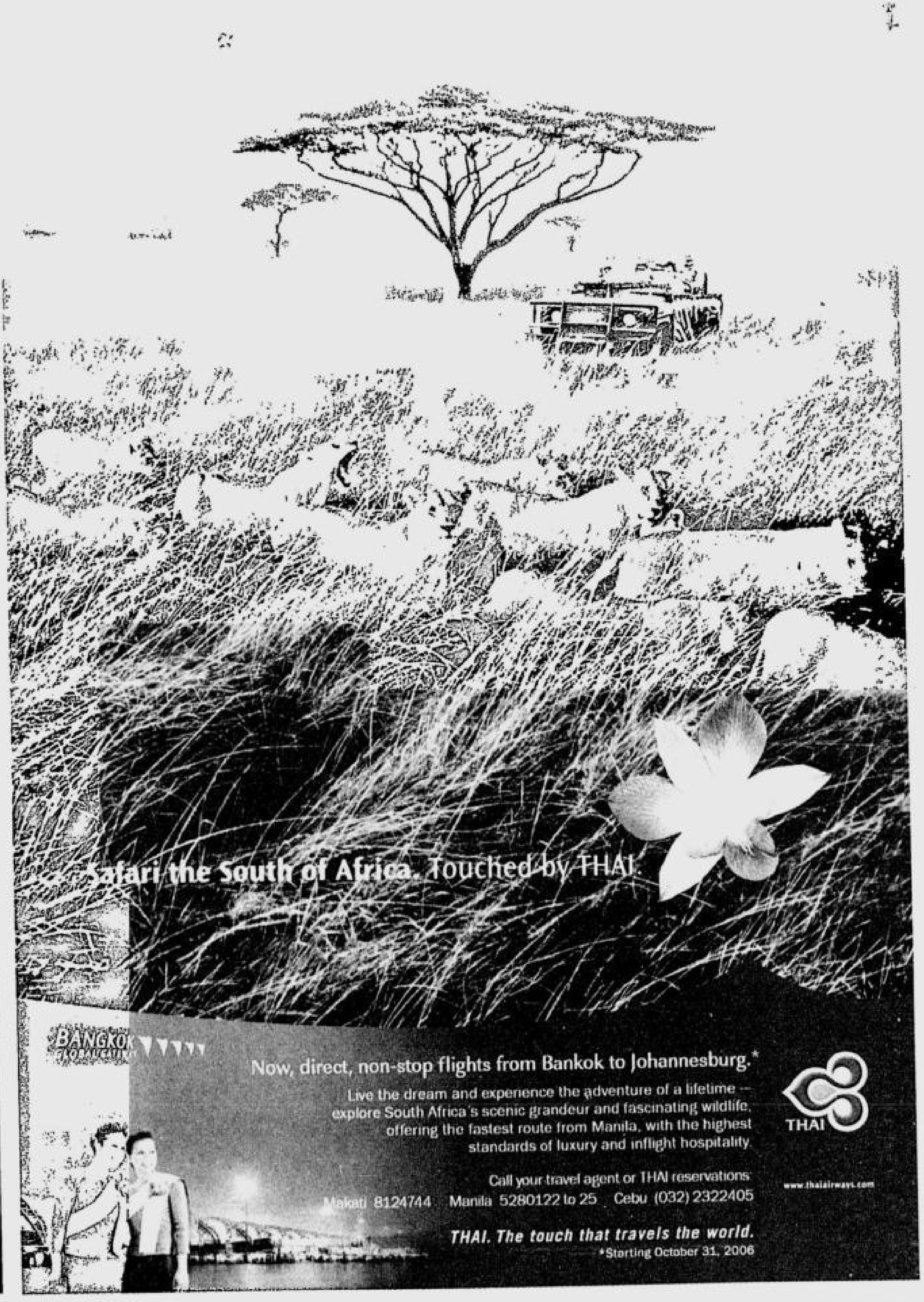

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Politics poses threat to fiscal reforms, HSBC says

Bank keeps RP credit rating, will wait for May election results

By Doris C. Dumlao

BRITISH BANKING GIANT HSBC has expressed concern that politics will derail the government's fiscal consolidation efforts and delay the passage of reform bills needed to hasten economic growth.

In its latest commentary on Philippines bond markets, HSBC analyst Dilip Shahani and economist Frederic Neumann said Philippine bonds face a bumpy road ahead due to political risks arising from the May 2007 election when mayors, governors, members of the House of Representatives and 12 senators seek office.

"These elections may play a critical role in shaping future government policymaking and test President Arroyo's ability to deflect impeachment calls from opposition political parties and other vested interest groups," the report said.

HSBC thus sees no reason to upgrade its own sovereign credit prospects for the Philippines in the first half of this year given the role the general elections will play in determining the country's medium-term economic and financial profile.

"Similarly, we do not expect Standard & Poor's, Moody's or Fitch to alter their current ratings of BB-, B1 and BB, respectively, until the implications of the general election outcome can be fully interpreted," the report said.

After years of belt-tightening, HSBC said in its report that it expected the government to spend more, particularly on desperately needed infrastructure projects. As the President gears up for political battles, it said public finance was bound to be loosened.

"In fact, slippage from the administration's ambitious deficit target of P63 billion in 2007 appears almost inevitable," the report said.

"Without further increases in tax rates, revenues are unlikely to rise at [last] year's elevated pace. Therefore, the budget deficit in 2007, an election year, is likely to be in the neighborhood of P100-120 billion, certainly not the blow-out of earlier years but sufficient to cast doubt on the government's target of a balanced budget in 2008," it warned.

Apart from possible slippage on the fiscal front, the HSBC report said the weak inflow of investments would remain a concern this year.

It noted that the country's investment to gross domestic product ratio - already one of the lowest in Asia - had continued to decline over the last six years despite buoyant output growth.

Atlas mining project gets tax perks

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS HAS granted tax perks to a subsidiary of Atlas Mining Consolidated Mining and Development Corp., which is set to complete a P12.5-billion mining project in Toledo City, Cebu, by November.

According to the BOI, the project of Carmen Copper Corp. was to be registered with the agency on a nonpioneer status, which qualifies the firm for a four-year income tax holiday, duty-free importation of capital equipment and other fiscal and nonfiscal perks.

Carmen Copper applied for pioneer status, which would qualify the firm to an ITH of up to six years, but the BOI said the project's use of a supposedly pioneering technology had not yet been confirmed by the Department of Science and Technology.

The firm would mine and mill copper ore and produce a yearly output of 15.2 million dry metric tons or 42,000 metric tons a day.

The ore is expected to yield a total of 46,577 DMT of copper; 41,066 ounces of gold; 147,860 ounces of silver; 162,860 MT of pyrite and 506,290 MT of magnetite.

The resumption of mining activity is expected to spur economic development in the area, and create 3,500 new jobs.

Last week, the company announced it was working with Deutsche Bank AG on a $100-million loan—guaranteed by the Philippine Export-Import Credit Agency—to help fund the rehabilitation of the copper mines, which was shut down in 1994 due to flooding, low copper prices and debts.

Gov't expects ₱104B from nontax revenues

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS ESTIMATED that the government would raise about P104 billion this year from nontax sources of income, such as privatization of state-owned assets, investments in foreign securities and dividends from state-owned firms.

According to a DOF report presented during a recent Cabinet meeting, P25.7 billion of the expected P103.8 billion worth of nontax revenues to be collected this year will come from the sale of public assets.

The expected revenues from privatization were much bigger than the original target of generating only P500 million from the sale of state-owned assets.

State-owned assets that are targeted to be privatized this year include the 46-percent share in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC), stocks in Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and San Miguel Corp. (SMC), television stations RPN 9 and IBC 13, Al-Amanah Islamic Bank and Philippine Postal Corp.

The DOF has begun studying the legal issues concerning the sale of the government's shares in SMC and Meralco.

In the case of RPN 9, the DOF's privatization unit was working on a compromise with the station's creditors for the sale to push through.

Aside from privatization, income by the Bureau of the Treasury forms part of the nontax revenues collected by the national government.

Of the P103.8 billion in nontax revenues, more than half, or P53.5 billion, will come from the BTr.

BTr income includes earnings from investments in foreign-denominated securities, including US Treasury bills and dividends of the national government from its shares in state-owned firms.

The DOF also estimated that government would generate P24.6 billion worth of other income, which includes fees and charges collected by government agencies from the public in the delivery of their services.

GOINGS-ON

Biotechnology summit set

HYBRIDIGM CONSULTING, IN COOPERATION with the Ateneo Graduate School of Business, is holding the third annual Philippine Biotechnology Venture Summit with the theme, "Getting Investors for Your Technology" from Jan. 10-12, 2007 at the auditorium of the Ateneo Professional Schools in Rockwell.

The summit is the Philippines' pioneering conference on biotechnology, and the 2007 edition will feature discussions on biotech entrepreneurship and investment.

During the course of the 2007 Summit, over 20 speakers will discuss vital areas in biotech entrepreneurship.

Speakers include Richard Cruz of the Asian Institute of Management; Johanna Klein of the ADB; Dr. Leodevico Ilag and Dr. Jocelyn Ng, cofounders of Xerion Pharmaceuticals; and Maoi Arroyo, CEO of Hybridigm Consulting.

To register, call 8138412 or e-mail info@philbiotech.com, or log on to www.philbiotech.com.

Farm . . .

From page B1

industry was devastated by the storm Milenyo," he added.

The seaweed industry is expected to take a hit of at least $10 million as strong waves wiped out production facilities during that time. Yap said these facilities were now being rehabilitated.

Economists are keeping a tight watch on the agriculture sector as it still accounts for a fifth of the local economy. Government production data will be ready by the third week of January, officials said.

According to the Bureau of Agriculture Statistics, despite the typhoons that hit the country, farm sector productivity in January to September grew 4.9 percent to P218.6 billion from P208.4 billion in the same period last year. In terms of volume, farm output grew 5.4 percent to 59.6 million metric tons from 56.6 million MT a year ago.

Crops accounted for P102.4 billion, up 5.8 percent from P96.8 billion. In terms of volume, crops rose 5.5 percent to 53.7 million MT.

Palay production increased by 9.7 percent to 9.5 million MT, while corn output shot up 15.7 percent to 4.8 million MT. This was due to more harvest areas, early rainfall, continued use and expansion of the adoption of hybrid and quality seeds, sufficient water and increased fertilizer application.

141 cases . . .

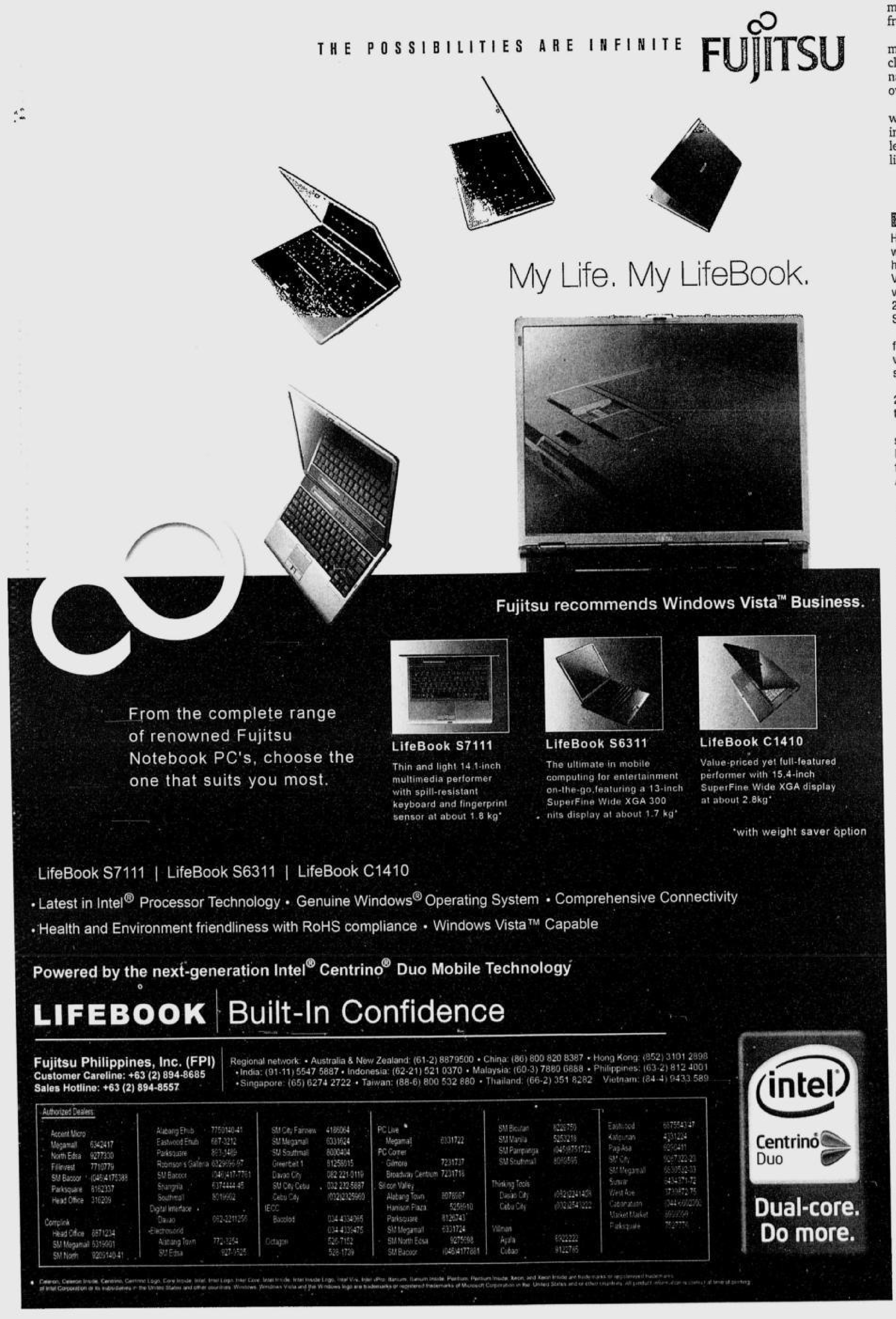
From page B1

offenders. The BIR earlier said charging middle-income earners for tax evasion was also necessary to put more teeth into the program.

The DOF said the Arroyo administration received $21 million worth of grant from the US government's Millennium Challenge Corp. (MCC) to help address problems of corruption. Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the money was used to help fund the operations of RATE, RATS and RIPS.

Teves said the Philippines could get as much as $300 million worth of grant if the government could show improvements in its fight against corruption. To get a much higher grant, Teves said, the Philippines should graduate from the "threshold" to "compact" level in terms of implementing its anti-corruption drive.

He cited Ghana, which recently was placed under the "compact" level and got $300 million in grant from MCC.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RP-Taiwan trade up 4.5% in first 10 mos of '06

Development of growth corridor linking economic zones planned

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TRADE BETWEEH THE PHILIPPINES and Taiwan increased by 4.5 percent to about US$6.09 billion in the 10 months to October as the two economies make headway in developing a growth corridor that links special economic zones on both shores.

Taiwan's Government Information Office or GIO reported that the island economy brought in goods from the Philippines worth some $2.39 billion as of the end of October.

This represents an improvement of 2.87 percent in orders from Taiwan from about $2.32 billion in the same period of 2005.

At the same time, Taiwan sent to the Philippines goods worth $3.7 billion, up by 5.64 percent from year-ago level.

In the January to October trading, Taiwan maintained a trade surplus of about $1.31 billion, increasing by 11 percent from $1.18 billion.

GIO data further showed that the Philippines remained the 13th largest trading partner of Taiwan accounting for 1.77 percent of its total global trade valued at $343.97 billion.

Among developing countries, the country has become Taiwan's fifth-largest trade partner after Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Indonesia.

The Philippines was still the 11th largest destination of Taiwanese exports with about 2.1 percent of its outbound cargoes valued at $175.98 billion.

In the previous month, the country was the 16th largest source of Taiwan imports. It accounted for 1.42 percent of the total imports of the island economy worth $167.99 billion.

Manila and Taipei signed in December 2005 a memorandum of agreement to establish a growth corridor that links the Kaohsiung freeport area in southwestern Taiwan to the Subic and Clark special economic zones in northern Philippines.

Last December, the director general of Taiwan's Export Processing Zone Authority said both governments had just concluded a meeting in which policies that would help develop the growth corridor were discussed.

Epza chief Sheng-bao Tseng said Taiwan now allows a 90-day visa for Filipino workers who want to undergo training there.

Normally, Filipinos—like other foreign workers bound for Taiwan—must have an employment contract of up to two years, renewable for a third year. Each worker is allowed to serve two contracts for a total of six years.

Tseng added that a "more convenient" cross-border movement of labor was one of the main concerns of Taiwanese firms that were interested in doing business in the Kaohsiung-Subic corridor.

He said Taiwan's Council of Labor Affairs had agreed to a concession for Filipino workers, whom employers prefer over other foreign workers for factory jobs.

Filipinos working in semiconductor factories spread across nine ecozones in Taiwan number at least 6,750 or 82.5 percent of all foreign workers deployed in the island economy.

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German firm urged to invest more in power generation in Mindanao

By Abigail L. Ho

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO is urging German firm Steag AG to consider putting up additional power capacity in Mindanao by expanding its existing capacity or building a new plant.

Steag AG is inaugurating today its 210-megawatt (MW) Mindanao Coal-fired Power Plant.

"The entry of this Mindanao Coal-Fired Power Plant is one of the crucial means in addressing the challenge of attaining stability in the supply of electricity in Mindanao. In fact, its full commercial operation during the last quarter of 2006 has contributed significantly in the reliability of power supply in the Mindanao grid," Ms Arroyo said in a statement issued by the Department of Energy.

Completed ahead of the January 2007 schedule, the $305-million power facility has been in commercial operation since November last year.

The plant's full commercial operation jacked up the Mindanao grid's reserve margin from a critical 13.2 percent to 24.6 percent in November 2006. The required reserve margin for the grid is 21 percent.

Apart from increasing the grid's reserve margin, the operation of the new coal-fired power plant also reduced the utilization of oil-based plants in Mindanao to 13 percent from between 26 percent and 32 percent.

The coal plant contributed some 16 percent to Mindanao's power generation mix, which hydropower continued to dominate at 61 percent.

With the commissioning of the plant and the transfer of three power barges with a total capacity of 75 MW from the Visayas grid in 2005, the energy department said the Mindanao grid now needed 850 MW in additional capacity from 2009 to 2014.

This additional capacity would be enough to meet the projected 6.4-percent average yearly growth in peak power demand, the DOE said.

Faulty math of women's right advocates

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATES continue to fight for a bigger share of the national landscape. But, their arithmetic is faulty.

Their claim is based on the fact that the population is 51 percent female. To be fair, they say, the female participation in every line of activity—whether in the professions, in politics or elsewhere—should be at least close to this figure. Four lady associate justices of the Supreme Court are only 27 percent of the total 15; there should be eight lady associate justices.

The arithmetic is faulty. The advocates have not considered one factor: by God's plan, child bearing is a woman's strict monopoly.

As a result, child rearing, thank heaven, is still a woman's noblest profession. We should stop using the adjective "mere" when describing a housewife.

I wonder if the National Statistics Office has any data on how many of our women, with college degrees from the best schools, choose not to pursue a career outside the home, and instead enjoy taking care of the children. Are they wasting away their college education? Of course not. At the very least, the mother helps the children with their homework.

The equation changes when the number of women who stay home to take care of the children are deducted from the total female population. Perhaps then, four lady associate justices of the Supreme Court are too many. But if a woman is brilliant enough to be the chief justice, that's fine with me.

Don't misunderstand me. I want the Filipino woman to pursue a career if she will be good at it. Once I was at a court hearing. The witness was a woman, about 30 years old. The private prosecutor and the defense lawyer were both women, well-coifed and good-looking. The elderly male judge was thoroughly enjoying the show unfolding before him.

In Asia, if not the world, the best place for a woman to be in is the Philippines. The rice farmer's wife helps her husband in the field, but she is never allowed to carry heavy loads. At a restaurant, the waiter serves the women first; in other parts of Asia, the women are served last. The Filipino woman won her right to vote 80 years ago; the Kuwaiti women first voted last year. Even if she comes from a poor family but is bright enough, our universal educational system allows the Filipino woman to earn a doctorate degree; in some parts of Asia, girls are allowed only six years of schooling.

The numbers game that the advocates of women's rights play is not only fuzzy arithmetic, it is unnecessary. Women can carve their rightful place in the sun by sheer persistence. This way, they can even overwhelm.

Let's take the life insurance industry. Fifty years ago, the Filipino male ruled the life insurance business. At Insular Life, there was only one lady section chief. Today, most of the vice presidents are women. There was then a handful of lady insurance agents. Today, 80 percent of the agents are women. This table of organization is repeated in every life insurance company in the land. The life insurance industry continues to grow by leaps and bounds.

Fifty years ago, the few actuaries in the country were all male. Today, Filipino female actuaries, all good-looking, entirely dominate this profession.

The non-life insurance industry has not been safe from the inroads by women. Women occupy executive positions in many companies. More and more lady insurance brokers qualify for licenses every year.

My concern when a woman pursues a career in the professions or politics or business is that the family is possibly being sacrificed at the altar of success. That can be tragic.

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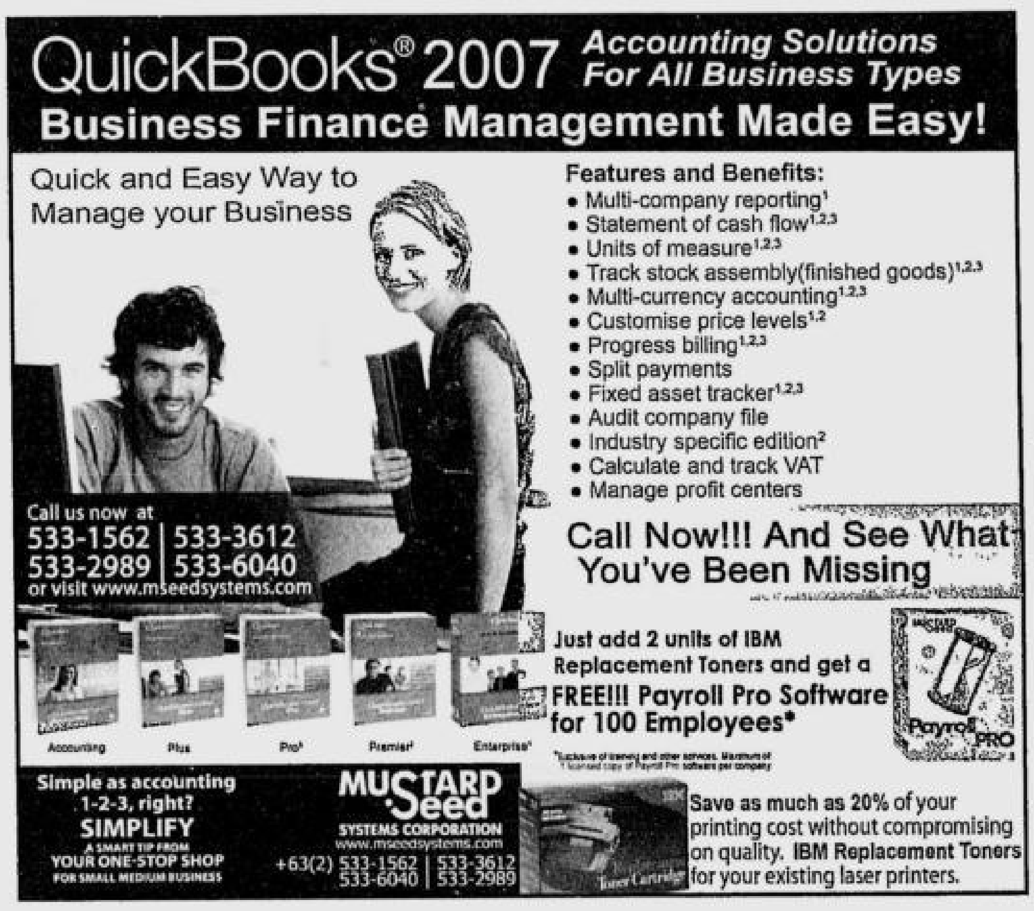

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PNB success story author to take over RCBC helm

Trade veterans Virata, Navarro to make way for Tan in RP's 10th largest bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

RIZAL COMMERCIAL BANKING CORP. OF THE Yuchengco group will mark a changing of the guard on Feb. 1 when Lorenzo Tan, architect of Philippine National Bank's financial turnaround, joins the country's 10th biggest bank to become its new CEO.

RCBC on Friday announced the retirement of two veterans, Cesar Virata and Rizalino Navarro, and the hiring of Tan as executive vice chair and CEO of the bank, replacing Navarro next month.

Tan, president and CEO of Sun Life Financial Plans Inc., earlier led PNB and United Coconut Planters Bank.

Under the new leadership, RCBC hopes to strengthen its capital base over the next 12 months.

Asked about what he hopes to achieve for RCBC, Tan said: "We plan to grow RCBC organically, and through acquisitions. We plan to grow our A and B market business, Chinese market, the C market, the provincial and overseas Filipino workers' business.

Tan also expects to use "technology-based innovations to compete and grow our business."

TAN

In an interview, Tan said that there would be healthier, stronger and more efficient banks in the Philippines due to consolidation, as well as stiffer competition and capital adequacy requirements.

As president of Sun Life, Tan played a pivotal role in raising the life and mutual funds business by over 70 percent, and boosting the pre-need performance of the country's second largest insurance company by more than 110 percent.

As CEO of PNB, Tan was credited for returning the bank to profitability through an aggressive rehabilitation program in 2003.

RCBC chair Helen Dee will act as CEO until Tan assumes office.

According to Dee, Tan is expected to continue the reforms that Navarro had started to increase the bank's capital and reduce its stock of bad assets.

Navarro will continue to serve in the bank's board of directors as senior advisor. In the Yuchengco group of companies, Navarro will continue to serve as chair of EEI Corp., the country's biggest industrial construction firm, as well as head Bankard Corp., oil exploration firm Petroenergy Corp. and Seafront Resources Corp.

Virata, who served as the country's only prime minister during the Marcos regime, will remain as corporate vice chair, director and senior advisor at the bank.

RCBC recently found a new foreign partner in Spinnaker Capital Group, which bought out the 17-percent stake divested by Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ.

NTC rushes to beat election period, mulls over 5-year plan

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICAtions Commission (NTC) plans to take a long, hard look at its existing five-year plan spanning 2004 to 2009.

But before it can get down to business, the regulator needs to deal with new service applications and renewals before the election period starts on Jan. 14.

The election period covers 45 days before and 45 days after the May 14 elections. This year, that period ends on June 13.

During the period, bidding and awarding of projects, among others, are banned, according to laws set by the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

The NTC said telecommunications services may be disrupted if service applications are caught in the election ban.

Commissioner Abraham Abesamis and his chief of staff, Jun Espinosa, told reporters that several en banc sessions had been held since December to get the applications going before Jan. 15.

Abesamis also told reporters that the NTC would soon create a technical working group (TWG) to review the five-year plan after pending applications have been attended to.

Among the TWG's tasks are: To update the current leadership of what has been accomplished; determine which projects, if any, are behind schedule; and make recommendations on how to ensure that all targets are met by 2009.

"We need to study what has been done before we proceed," Abesamis said.

Among the projects in the five-year plan were: The promulgation of rules and regulations and other guidelines on emerging technologies, such as WiFi, VoIP, and 3G by end-2004; full ICT interconnection in the country by end-2006; a fully automated national frequency management system by end-2006; the establishment of digital broadcast standards by end-2006; universal ICT access for all communities in urban areas, and 50 percent of communities in rural areas by end-2009; and, the operation of a nationwide radio monitoring system by end-2009.

According to the plan, these targets may be achieved by streamlining procedures, conducting public consultations and hearings, encouraging private sector participation in NTC programs, advocating the enactment of laws penalizing illegal cable and other connections, creating technical working groups that will focus on priority projects, conducting an inventory of all networks and initiating interconnection, establishing data bases, and mandating universal access.

So far, the targets reportedly met were the classification of Voice over IP as a value-added service, the crafting of 3G rules and a points system for choosing frequency licensees, the establishment of rules against predatory pricing, and draft policies on digital TV and fair competition.

These were all accomplished under the watch of former NTC Commissioner Ronald Solis, who left office at the end of November.

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Developer sees a 'good month'

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY DEVELOPER MEGAWORLD CORP. is upbeat on its stock rights offering, saying it has been met with positive feedback from investors, according to Megaworld chair Andrew Tan.

"The response has been very strong," Tan said. "We expect over-subscriptions. A number of stockholders indicated they wanted to subscribe more than the allotment… this is going to be a very good month."

Megaworld earlier set the price for its stock rights offer at P1.83 apiece, hoping to raise roughly P10.8 billion for the company and its shareholders. Megaworld is offering 5.9 billion common shares, covering a 2 for 5 stock rights offer. The offering closes tomorrow, Jan. 9.

The price was set to encourage traders to participate in Megaworld's offering and provide incentives for existing shareholders.

Under the terms of the offer, each eligible stockholder is entitled to subscribe to two rights shares for every five common shares held as of the record date Dec. 15.

Megaworld will use the proceeds from the rights offer to fund projects in 2007 and 2008.

Of the P10.8 billion Megaworld hopes to raise, P4 billion will go to the development of City Place Hotel, business process outsourcing buildings and retail projects in Binondo.

About P1 billion will be set aside to expand Eastwood's BPO office building. Some P3 billion will be used to buy prime properties, while P2 billion will be set aside as working capital for residential condominiums in Forbes Town Center, McKinley Hill, and Bonifacio Global City in Taguig.

In its disclosure, Megaworld said additional sales of P1.8 billion would be booked during the last quarter of this year from its Eastwood and Fort Bonifacio projects.

Megaworld executive director Kingson Sian had said Megaworld stood to book sales of P10 billion in 2007, with contributions from its six projects in Eastwood, Forbes Town Center, McKinley, Newport City, Manhattan Garden Square and City Place.

Megaworld over the next few years will focus on six key projects: The 15-hectare township development called Eastwood Cyberpark in Libis, Quezon City; the five-ha Forbes Town Center, a joint project at the Fort Bonifacio Global City; a 50-ha mixed-use project on McKinley Hill, Fort Bonifacio; the 25-ha Newport City, a hotel and golf resort in Pasay City; the 5.7-ha Manhattan Garden City project undertaken with the Araneta Center Group; and the 4.6-ha Cityplace project in Binondo.

DOF cautions gov't in meting out tax, duty-free incentives

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE WANTS THE government to exercise caution in formulating the 2007 Investment Priorities Plan (IPP), saying that the goal of wiping out the budget deficit must take precedence over the grant of fiscal incentives to businesses.

In a draft memorandum to the Board of Investments (BOI), the DOF said that the giving of incentives should be consistent with ongoing efforts to rationalize the system of granting tax- and duty-free perks to businesses.

"The IPP will be directly affected by the ongoing incentives rationalization and fiscal consolidation move of the government," the DOF said.

Concerned agencies, led by the BOI, are already in the process of drafting the framework for the 2007 IPP.

The IPP, which the government renews annually, is a list of industries and business activities that will be covered by fiscal incentives. The granting of incentives is meant to attract investments and create more jobs.

Industries that were granted incentives under the 2006 IPP included agribusiness, health-care and wellness, information and communications technology, electronics, motor vehicle, energy infrastructure, tourism, shipbuilding and shipping, jewelry and fashion garments.

Incentives enjoyed by businesses belonging to the industries mentioned, include an income tax holiday, duty-free importation of capital equipment, exemption from wharfage, and exemption from local business taxes.

The DOF, the agency in charge of managing the government's fiscal resources, is strongly pushing for the rationalization of fiscal incentives granted to businesses.

The deficit-ridden government is said to be losing huge amounts in potential revenue from the careless grant of incentives.

According to the DOF, the government loses about P300 billion in potential revenue every every year due to the grant of tax and duty-free perks.

The DOF wants to minimize the losses by taking away incentives that are considered "redundant."

Redundant incentives are those that are given to businesses which would have invested in the Philippines, anyway even without the tax- or duty-free privileges.

According to a study commissioned by the DOF and authored by Dr. Renato Reside of the University of the Philippines, 83 percent of incentives given to businesses registered with the BOI were redundant.

A bill rationalizing fiscal incentives is now pending in Congress.

Under the bill authored by Sen. Ralph Recto, fiscal incentives should only be granted to businesses that are export-oriented, and to those that are located in the country's poorest provinces.

The government posted a budget deficit of P146.8 billion in 2005. For 2006, the government expected the budget gap to fall between P80 billion and P90 billion.

The government aims to further reduce the deficit to only P63 billion this year, and to post a zero deficit by 2008.

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OPTIMA BALANCED FUND, INC. : Registration of Securities
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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on November 15, 2006, a Registration Statement was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission for and on behalf of **OPTIMA BALANCED FUND, INC.** for the registration of Two Hundred Million (200,000,000) common shares with the par value of One Peso (P1.00) each for an aggregate value of Two Hundred Million Pesos (P200,000,000.00), representing its entire authorized capital stock.

According to the papers/documents presented, the following persons are the directors/officers of the corporation:

NAME	POSITION
Jose Alberto T. Alba	Chairman of the Board/Director
Raymund P. Navarro	President/Director
Jose L. Santos	Director
Francisco A. Alba	Director
Antonio P. Gatmaitan	Director
Paul Joseph M. Garcia	Independent Director
Francisco T. Alba Jr.	Director
Lyndon L. Lukban	Treasurer
Atty. Celerino A. Patino	Corporate Secretary

Said Registration Statement and other papers/documents attached thereto are open to inspection by interested parties during business hours and copies thereof, photostatic or otherwise, shall be furnished to every party at such reasonable fees as the Commission may prescribe.

(Sgd.) JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN
Director

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The Philharmonia Singers Association was established in 1997, to meet the increasing demand in recent years for a professional, high-quality vocal group, and to fill the void created in the field of symphonic and chamber vocal music in Israel.

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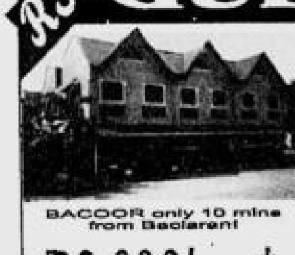

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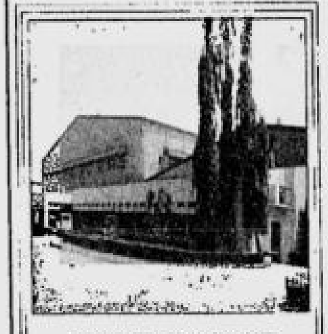

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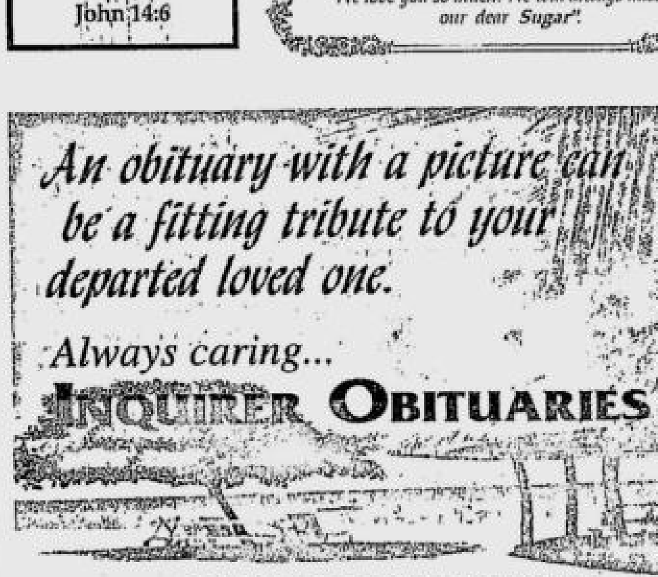
Has joined the Lord in Eternal peace
last January 05, 2007 at the age of 31.

She lies at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Parañaque City. Interment will be on Wednesday, 3:00 p.m. January 10, 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Parañaque City.

She is survived by her husband **Lester**, mother **Aida**, brother **Mike**, and sister-in-law **Denice**.

"We love you so much. We will always miss you our dear ***Sugar****".*



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RICHARD "DICK" F. BALDOVINO

Died in the Grace of our Lord
on January 6, 2007 at the age of 69.

His bereaved wife, **Josie Joya**,
children **Joseph**, **Alex**, **Marison** and
Ronnie, mother **Dulcina**,
sister **Norma Lynn**, brother **Henry**,
sisters-in-law **Pining** and **Ching Joya**,
relatives and friends request
the pious reades to pray for the
eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the
St. Peter Memorial Homes,
Quezon Avenue, Quezon City.

His cremains will be interned at
Himlayang Pilipino on **Wednesday,**
January 10, 2007 at 9:00 a.m.

BSP reviews ‘fit and proper’ rule blacklist

Some in the list may be removed, says BSP exec

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS is reviewing and ‘rationalizing’ its list of people barred from assuming key positions in banks and quasi-banks.

An INQUIRER source said there were about 700 people blacklisted under the ‘fit and proper’ rule of the BSP on bank officers and directors.

“The BSP is reviewing the list to ensure that those in the list really deserved the bad label,” the source said.

He said there were concerns that some of the people in the list might not have been given due process, or have already proven themselves worthy of a better record.

In a separate interview, BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision and examination Nestor Espenilla Jr. said it was clear under the rules that before anyone could be included in the watchlist—whether temporarily or permanently—it must be approved by the Monetary Board upon the recommendation of the supervision and examination sector of the BSP.

“We’re reviewing the list and looking at records to see if there are people who should be removed,” Espenilla said.

Under the BSP’s ‘fit and proper’ rule, persons with findings of conviction, culpability or administrative liability, as may be determined by other government agencies, may be disqualified permanently or temporarily from holding key positions in banks or quasi banks.

The nature of disqualification depends on whether the judgement rendered on an individual is final and executory, still pending appeal or if the sanction imposed is merely suspension or monetary penalty.

Those permanently disqualified from holding director or officer positions are those who have been convicted by final judgment for offense involving dishonesty or breach of trust—such as embezzlement, malversation and extortion, and people convicted by final judgment for bribery, falsification as well as violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

Persons who refuse to disclose any material information to the BSP when required pursuant to a provision of a law or regulation, and bank directors who have been absent for more than half of all meetings of the board during their incumbency may be temporarily disqualified.

But directors and officers temporarily disqualified for certain irregularities or on the basis of derogatory information may be given a chance to clear themselves after showing good and justifiable reasons or after a lapse of five years from the time the basis of the derogatory record was initiated.

As such, Espenilla issued a new circular requiring all banks and non-bank financial institutions to submit an authorization form to the BSP’s bank examination and supervision department when making queries regarding the watchlist files of the BSP for the purpose of screening and hiring applicants and confirming elected directors and appointed officers.

Pricey music dropped from ring tones list

By Riza T. Olchondra

TELECOM COMPANIES IN THE PHILIPPINES and Indonesia have dropped most international songs in their mobile music repertoire for ring tones, full track downloads, video music downloads and true tones because of a legal dispute with some music publishers, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) said.

IFPI represents the interests of the recording industry worldwide.

In a report posted on its website, IFPI said the recording industry would still be able to offer domestic and some international repertoire, but was keen to reach consumers with its full offering.

“The industry is working to help broker an agreement between the international publishers and the telcos to restore the availability of most international works in these countries,” it said.

Local record industry association Philippine Association of the Record Industry Inc. confirmed he IFPI report, saying that the country’s two major mobile service providers—Smart Communication Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc.—recently withdrew most international repertoire from their newly-launched music services after the international publishers sought royalties higher than the rate charged by local producers.

“Smart and Globe had started cutting back as early as October,” Pari chair Christopher Sy told the INQUIRER.

Record companies including EMI, Universal, SonyBMG and Warner Music had launched a number of music services in partnership with Globe and Smart Telecom offering master recordings of top international artists including Beyonce, Black Eyed Peas, Coldplay and Madonna.

The record companies, represented by Pari, had secured from local publishers licenses at 10 percent royalty per track. International publishers, however, are seeking double that rate.

In early September, Pari was warned that its members should stop offering international repertoire through the mobile services or face possible legal proceedings. The telcos chose to cut back on foreign songs.

“We are very disappointed with the recent developments,” Sy said. “By depriving the Philippines of exciting mobile music services, the real losers are going to be the consumers. The music industry cannot afford a dispute which will stunt the growth of our legitimate business and only encourage music fans to find the tracks they want on the pirate networks.”

Insurance body goes full blast on computerization

THE INSURANCE COMMISSION HAS accepted the delivery of 120 brand new computers last week as part of its ongoing program to computerize and upgrade its capability to serve the insuring public and supervise the insurance industry.

The Commission also expects the delivery of 60 printers and six servers, as well as the installation of cable systems in the coming weeks.

“We are preparing for the construction of a sophisticated data center to house the enormous amount of data and reports that are submitted by the more than 140 insurance companies,” said IC Commissioner Evangeline Escobillo.

“We hope to finish the data center by April this year and have it running by the second quarter of 2007.”

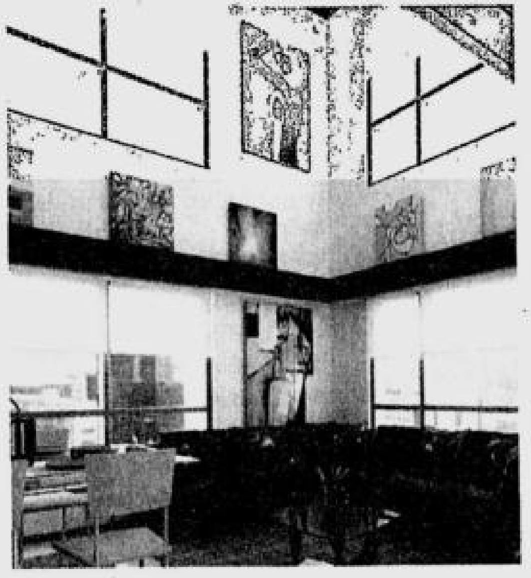
In February last year, the IC launched its website www.insurance.gov.ph. Since then the commission has been receiving a lot of positive feedback as it makes industry information and current developments more accessible to the insuring public.

THE FORT
RESIDENCES

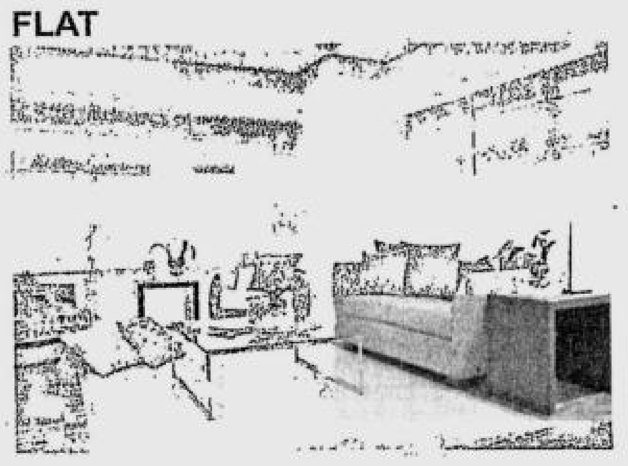
Both

Choose privacy. Choose innovation. The "loft" is a product of artistic minds from 19th Century Paris and is favored for space and functionality. The master's bedroom is located a level above the dining, living and kitchen areas, with an additional bedroom on the first floor for 2 and 3-bedroom units. High ceilings are integrated for a refreshing atmosphere and bigger space.

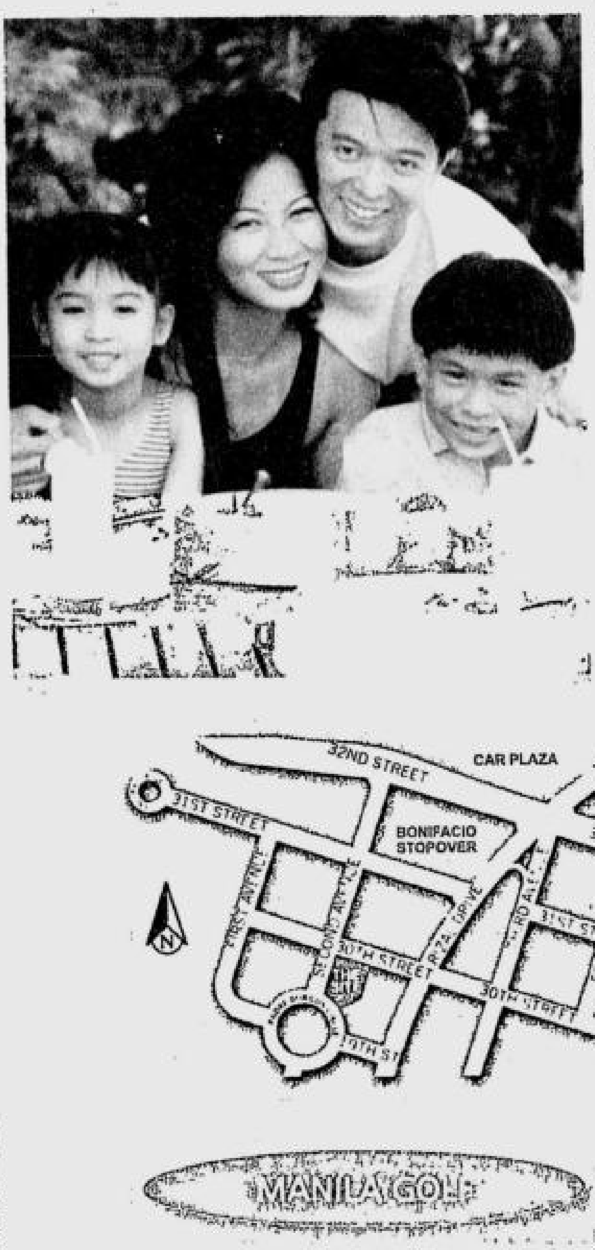
LOFT



FLAT



Choose convenience. Choose convention. A time-tested product, the "flat" is warmly received for freeform living and ease. The dining, living and kitchen areas are all located on the same floor as the bedroom level. Everything needed is just around the corner and well within their reach.



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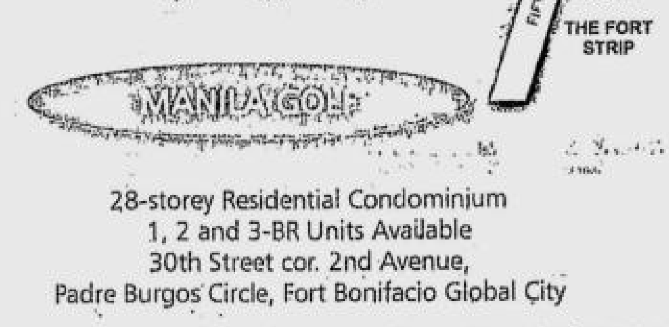

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Are business schools businesses?

A look at why even the best RP schools are not at par with the world's best

By Eduardo Morato Jr.
Professor, Asian Institute of Management

ARE GRADUATE SCHOOLS OF business businesses? Or are they part of society's educational mission to help build nations and develop competitive industries?

This debate was sparked by the question of a graduate school president who asked his faculty "What is our business model for the business school?"

This raised a quizzical response from a faculty member, "Shouldn't we be asking, first and foremost, what is our education philosophy and mission?"

There is a tremendous need to become a sustainable educational institution that can afford to pay a topnotch faculty in order to deliver the best possible education to students coming from all over Asia.

Without government subsidy and a huge endowment war chest, it is extremely difficult to compete with Asian schools which do not rely on tuition fees alone to lure students with the highest GMAT scores and faculty with the best academic credentials.

If a Philippine school were to rely solely on tuition fees, then it would be forced to accept students who can afford to pay high fees but whose academic qualifications may not be at par with the best.

The mission of education is much too important to be left to the vagaries of the market place. That is why primary and secondary public education in the Philippines is given free.

For richer countries, education is subsidized by the state or highly subsidized by private benefactors and philanthropists up to the post graduate levels.

Favorite beneficiaries

In an Asia wide study of High Net Worth Individuals (HNIs) conducted by the Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium, the favorite beneficiaries of HNIs, are educational institutions.

Next came health institutions as a distant second. In Asia, the top business schools are heavily supported by their governments.

These include the National University of Singapore, the Indian Institute of Management, the Melbourne and Sydney universities of Australia and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

These schools compete for the best students with generous scholarship offers.

Some like NUS and IIM have relatively very low tuition fees to serve their national mission.

HARVARD University - one of the best universities in the world.
SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.HBS.EDU/

What it takes

What does it take to compete as a regional graduate school of business?

International accreditation bodies are looking for several things:

First, is that at least 50 percent of the faculty should have doctoral degrees.

The top graduate schools of business in Asia have 100 percent of their faculty with doctorates.

Second, they determine whether the faculty are regular contributors to the academic body of knowledge on management through reputable publications and conferences, research undertakings and high profile consultancies.

Third, they evaluate student entrance test scores, with GMATs hovering at 650.

Fourth, they review curricula and syllabi according to articulated objectives on the management knowledge, skills and competencies that students should learn.

Fifth, they review the placement records and career development of the school's graduates.

Sixth, they interview alumni, recruiting corporations and other schools to verify and validate their findings.

Seventh, they expect the deans, associate deans, and academic directors to be highly respected academic pillars who are truly first among equals. They are not looking for mere administrators who do not have the proper academic pedigree.

All this makes the mission of attaining world class status as an international graduate school of business a formidable and very expensive proposition.

One can have PhDs galore coming from third rate institutions and attain the 50 percent minimum requirement, but that's cheating.

One can come up with easier student entrance exams to approximate quality but that's also cheating.

One can project and, even, fabricate the image of being a great school but sooner or later, the truth will come out.

First to complain are the recruiters. Next, the better and more qualified faculty will begin questioning their very own school. Third, enrollments will drop.

Economic considerations

In the face of the quality and sustainability dilemma, the question remains: Should world class business education be a business or a social mission?

Sheer economic considerations make it difficult to run a quality business school as a business.

International faculty based in Singapore or Hong Kong could easily get $8,000 to $10,000 a month.

If one includes housing, health care and other benefits, an additional $5,000 should be added. This comes up to an average of $14,000 a month or P8 million a year.

If the faculty were expected to devote at least 25 percent of their time to quality academic research, this would balloon the entire payroll by 25 percent, excluding expenses for researchers, travel and other research support requirements.

If all these cash outflows were incurred, the school either has to charge astronomical tuition fees or go for huge numbers of students.

High tuition fees would shrink the market considerably. Going for the numbers would jeopardize quality standards. Doing both would court disaster because the school would be forced to take in a lot of rich but dumb students.

In the United States, even reputable business schools support-

ARE BUSINESS/ B2-3

UP is RP's best school

FOUR PHILIPPINE universities made it to the top 500 in the world, based on the THES-QS World University Rankings.

THES-QS is a three year old ranking system that claims it is one of the few organizations that have attempted to tackle the task of ranking universities throughout the world from a global perspective.

THES stands for The Times Higher Education Supplement—a weekly newspaper dedicated to providing academics with the information they need—from job listings to news to research findings while QS is the world's leading network for careers and education.

Highest ranking

The University of the Philippines had the highest ranking among the Philippine universities included in the list.

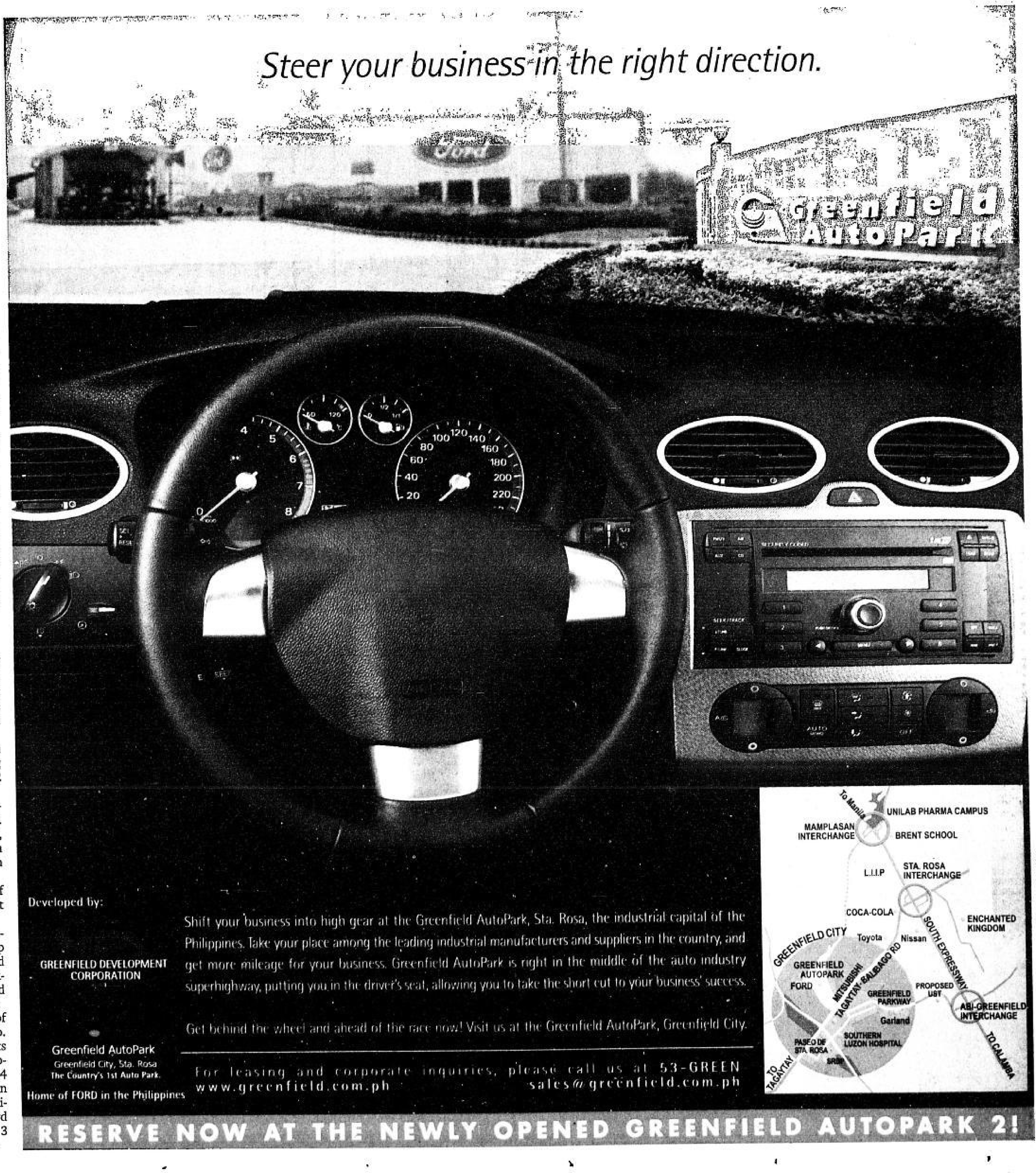
UP ranked 299 in the 2006 list—a big jump from its 372 rank in 2005.

De La Salle University ranked No. 392. La Salle's arch rival, the Ateneo de Manila University, was much lower at No. 484.

The University of Sto. Tomas made it at No. 500.

For two consecutive years, the top school in the world based on the Rankings was Harvard University of the US.

UK's University of Cambridge was No. 2. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology dropped to No. 4 in 2006 from No. 2 in 2005 list. UK's University of Oxford climbed to No. 3 from No. 4 in 2005.



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Online developing for digital photographers

Mozcom, Fuji YKL team up to launch Picatoo

By Abigail L. Ho

CAPITALIZING ON THE popularity of digital photography, Internet service provider Mozcom and Fuji YKL have joined forces to launch online photo developing service Picatoo.

Picatoo business development manager Tin Loya says the new service allows users to develop their digital images from the comforts of their own homes or from anywhere with an Internet connection.

"We saw an opportunity in (digital photography developing) because of the growing number of digital camera owners and their need for a user-friendly and reliable online printing solution," she said.

"With so many digital photos stored online, it only made sense to create such a service, taking cue from the success of similar ventures in foreign countries," she added.

While digital photography has made storing and sharing photos electronically almost the norm, Picatoo believes that this trend has not eliminated the need for traditional prints that can be passed around during family gatherings and special events.

Considering today's busy and fast-paced lifestyle, Picatoo is designed to make printing digital images less of a hassle.

All a user has to do is to go to the Picatoo website, www.picatoo.com, and create an account.

Designed to be user-friendly, Picatoo can be used even by individuals with a minimal understanding of technology as photos can be uploaded using a Web browser using very simple drag-and-drop operations.

The photos are printed using the Fuji Digital Minilab Frontier developing system, which, Loya says, churns out "prints that will last a lifetime."

Picatoo allows users to have their digital images printed as conventional-sized 4R prints or even as photo posters with sizes of up to 12x18 inches.

Each print is priced the same as traditional photo prints, with a typical 4R print costing P6 apiece.

Prints are then delivered for free to the customer's house for a minimum purchase of P250 for Metro Manila or P300 for areas outside the metro.

Aside from digital image printing services, Picatoo also offers customized mugs, calendars, mouse pads, T-shirts, and other items.

All payments are made online, with the site accepting all major international credit cards, plus BancNet and MegaLink ATM accounts, Globe G-Cash, Smart Money and UCPB my1Time.

Like fishing for anchovies

By Art Villasanta
Contributor

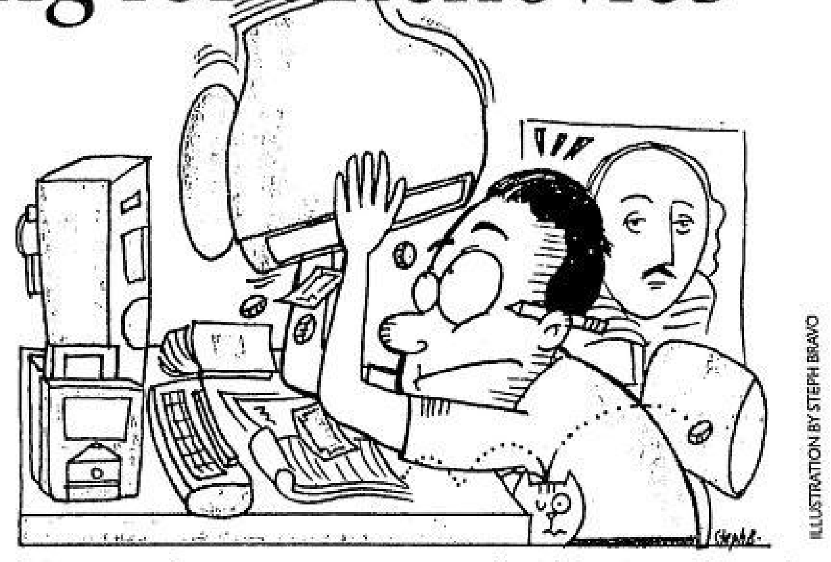

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

THE INTERNET IS HARDLY THE right place to land big-bucks writing jobs from foreigners.

You can visit legitimate job sites such as Craigslist.org for worldwide writing jobs; leave your job hunt offer on Expat.com if you want to work in Dubai; post your "hire me" personal ad at 88db.com and search the long job list on Filipinowriter.com, a great resource for Pinoys who write in English.

You can also visit Google.com, Yahoo.com or Ask.com and type your job hunt query in their search boxes. You can then spend the next two hours hacking through the tremendous amount of data dumped onto your Firefox or IE browser.

All these sites open a universe of possibilities, but landing a writing job from foreign job posters sometimes feels like you're fishing for anchovies in the middle of the Pacific Ocean using a hook, line and sinker.

And if someone does e-mail you with a job offer, you've got to figure out if you can trust this foreigner.

A lot of the shady operators you'll bump into are con artists, "spammers," "phishers," click-per-view crooks and sales guys selling software they claim will make you an Internet millionaire. Puhleez!

Few replies

I applied to over a hundred jobs on the Net on about a dozen sites in 2006. I got just five solid replies and landed just one job that paid me less than P1,000, and this was a referral from a friend.

One job site in the United Kingdom didn't pay the 200 pounds they said they'd pay for a story I wrote about biofuels. Silly me for believing anyone would pay 200 pounds to a total stranger in a place called The Philippines.

People at an ICT company in Shanghai said they were impressed with my resumé and would e-mail me again, which they never did. A writer in the United States dropped off the radar when I gave him an hourly rate. Turns out that he wanted to pay me a tenth of what I wanted.

A PR company in Hong Kong had the courtesy to call me on my cellphone and we talked about job prospects. The next e-mail I got from the company said the girl in charge of the job had resigned and they couldn't access her files.

Insulting offers

Craigslist.org is a great site for international writing jobs. Only trouble is the rest of the world thinks writing is cheap and Filipino writers even cheaper.

There was this one job posting from someone in the United States that said he'd pay the princely amount of P50 for every 200-word story he approved. P50! That's probably what my father made per story in the 1960s! And he was an experienced and famous editor!

For the life of me, I can never understand why a lot of folks still labor under the delusion that writing is so easy you can pay writers what amount to slave wages even DHs would refuse.

Serious writing is always a tough job. You can't write intelligently unless you've got something other than air between your ears.

That's why good writers do research, write, re-write and re-write and interview when needed.

As they say in ICT, it's Gigo or "garbage in/garbage out." A silly writer will produce garbage because that's what he's got in his head.

A smart writer, on the other hand, will give you work that does the job and more besides.

Before job-hunting on the Net, however, I did my homework and read stories warning against expecting too much from Internet job sites. But I decided to take the plunge for the same reason Pinoys turn into OFWs: a shot at The Big Time.

Trust factor

Craigslist, which is based in the USA, urges browsers of its website to avoid scams and fraud by dealing locally. They're right.

The key phrase here is "dealing locally." Face-to-face is really the best way to get a job and that can only happen if the job poster and the job hunter happen to be in the same country.

A great resumé from some alien in a far off Asian country can't replace the trust factor, meaning an employer would rather meet the person he intends to deal with. Same goes for the writer.

Then there's the matter of how these faceless guys will pay you—if they decide to pay you. You know the poster's from the United States if he offers to pay you via PayPal.com or Xoom.com. Xoom's now in the Philippines but PayPal isn't.

That leaves you with the option of having your check made out to your brother or sister in the US or Canada and asking him or her to send you the cash by door-to-door. Dysfunctional siblings will have a problem here.

So, how's a writer going to earn serious cash given the bad odds of getting a good freelance writing job on the Internet?

Your guess is as good as mine.

LCD Screen Size: 15"
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Contrast: 400:1
Max. Brightness: 270 cd/m2
Response Time: 12ms
iKey Auto Adjustment
T505
BenQ
Bringing you enjoyment and Quality.
T705
LCD Screen Size: 17"
Resolution: Native SXGA (1280x1024)
Contrast: 500:1
Max. Brightness: 300 cd/m2
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Programmers to blame for hard-to-use software

NEW YORK—RETIRED MICROBIOLOGIST Diana Westmoreland is no stranger to technology—except when it comes to computers.

"The programs are intimidating. The language that's used is a foreign one to me," said Westmoreland, who lives near Cardiff, Wales. "I'm the sort of person who, when something crashes, apologizes to the screen."

The problem, says consultant David Platt, lies not with the user but with the programmers, who just don't think like the people who use their products.

Platt is a computer science instructor at the Harvard University Extension School and the author of a new book called "Why Software Sucks ... And What You Can Do About It," published by Pearson Plc unit Pearson Education.

Pet peeves

One of his peeves is when a text-editing program like Microsoft Word asks users if they want to save their work before they close their document.

That question makes little sense to computer novices accustomed to working with typewriters or pen and paper, he said.

For them, a clearer question would be: "Throw away everything you've just done?"

Boxes that ask users to confirm whether they want to take a step such as deleting a document are another example of what he calls a bad feature.

"Your car does not ask, 'Do you really want to start the engine?' when you turn the key," Platt said.

The confirmation box has become so overused that no one pays any attention to it, even when it's warning about a document that should be kept, he said.

Error messages represent software communication at its worst, Platt said.

In his book, he recounts how after trying to save a webpage from his Internet browser, he received a message that said it couldn't be done and gave him no choice but to hit the OK button.

"No, it is not OK with me that this operation didn't work and the program can't explain why," he wrote.

Your.user.is.not.you

Platt, who has also written nine books for computer professionals, has a message for software developers: "Your. User. Is. Not. You."

People who write software programs value control. The user, on the other hand, just wants something that's easy to operate.

Many software programs come with functions—like the ability to move the menu bar—that the average person does not want or need.

David Thomas, executive director of the Software & Information Industry Association's software division, disputed Platt's assessment of computer programmers.

According to Thomas, the trouble with software programs is that good ones often get overloaded with features demanded by "power users," such as big corporations or vocal individuals.

As more and more software becomes Internet-based, he said, companies can more easily monitor their users' experiences and improve their programs with frequent updates.

They have a financial incentive to do so, since more consumer traffic results in higher subscription or advertising revenues.

"They know that if they don't make the customer experience enjoyable that the customer will stop using them," he said, "whereas if I sell you a (software) product, I don't care if you use it or not; I have your money."

Long way to go

There is one area, however, where Thomas and Platt agree: the Web still has a long way to go.

Too many websites start off with home pages that offer animation, music—and no real information.

"Every time I want to look at an article and I have to click to get past that multimedia thing, it drives me crazy," Thomas said. "They should be monitoring the fact that 99 percent of people try click on 'close' within a certain fraction of a second to get away from that thing."

Web search company Google Inc. and photocopy chain Fedex Kinko's, a unit of Fedex Corp., provide easy-to-use websites, but others are still more complicated than they need to be, Platt said.

Platt urges his readers to let them know about software problems by posting feedback on their websites.

"The best companies want to hear from users," he said.

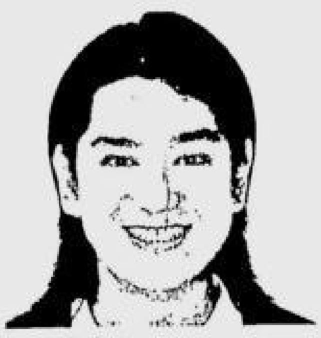
He also advises consumers to check out what trustworthy software reviewers have to say about a product before they buy it and to post their own comments on websites that sell the programs.

However, individuals can only do so much, and he is working on forming an organization called "It Just Works" (http://suckbusters.com) to laud the good programs and ridicule the bad.

REUTERS

McCann Worldgroup RP has new CCO

MCCANN WORLDGROUP Philippines achieved a major coup in winning over local creative icon Raul Castro to assume the post of chief creative officer by mid-February next year.


CASTRO

Castro, known for his success with award-winning and business-building campaigns for both global and local brands, will be Worldgroup's first chief creative officer (CCO). He is tasked to advance creative standards across the multidisciplinary company, and to play a key role in New Business—an area where Castro's proven track record is acknowledged.

The CCO appointment follows the recent public launch in the Philippines of McCann Worldgroup's new Demand Creation philosophy and multidiscipline marketing communications approach to driving top line business growth for clients and brands. The role of the CCO was created to ensure integration of creative ideas across McCann Worldgroup's seven distinct discipline offerings, and enhance collaboration and synergy among discipline creative teams.

Are business schools . . .

From page B2-1

ed by the government. maintain an army of alumni relations personnel whose job is to raise funds.

The strategy is three-pronged: (1) obtain state support; (2) raise funds from alumni and philanthropists; and (3) charge high tuition fees from rich but qualified students from all over the world on the strength of its reputation.

Low rankings

In general, Philippine universities rank relatively low in international rankings.

A major cause of our low standings is the unattractiveness of teaching jobs compared to industry opportunities.

If the job seeker has no strong vocation for teaching, then he would not really seek it out. And yet, top schools need the top brains of the land. If schools pay peanuts to their teachers, then they would get monkeys working for them.

Another major cause is the low priority given by Philippine schools to academic research that comes up with original thought, new theories and novel paradigms.

Very few professors in Philippine business schools, endeavor to write graduate-level books and refereed articles.

It is much easier and more rewarding for them to be consultants to large business firms. As a result, it is a "no contest" situation. The result is the proliferation of Philippine business professors who are forever mouthing the likes of Porter, Kotler et al. They have very little contribution to the international body of knowledge.

Quality business education aiming for world class stature cannot survive purely as business propositions. If they were, then they would lose their donors and benefactors who are providing funds because there is a high social and economic rate of return to society, in general, and the business community, in particular. If these donors perceive that the school is no longer living up to its social mission and is becoming a business, then they would close their funding faucets.

While it is good for schools to charge tuition fees at market rates (if there are enough rich but qualified applicants), it would be foolish of them to think that the full costs of running a world class business school could be adequately covered by such.

The school has to appeal to social investors and education philanthropists. However, the school must be very clear that it is primarily serving an education mission with a very clear education philosophy anchored on the highest expectations of its stakeholders. Then it stands a chance.

Anti-snob zoning and environmental footprints

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Felino Palafox Jr.

THE FILM, THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH with former US Vice President Al Gore presenting, and the speech of former President Fidel V. Ramos last week on "Investing in the Environment" admonishing Filipinos to be more caring, sharing and daring, inspired me to share the "inconvenient truth" about our 400-year-old obsolete Zoning by Segregation.

The Inclusionary zoning, or more popularly known as Anti-Snob Zoning of the State of Massachusetts, requires the inclusion of affordable dwelling units in all urban developments. The law has influenced the development of higher density, multi family, mixed use, mixed income, cross generational, walkable, bikeable, and livable charming neighborhoods in Boston/Cambridge metropolitan area.

The rest of the 50 states are trying to adopt the anti-snob zoning. The mayors of London and Brisbane in 2000 even declared to the world that there would be no more gated communities in their cities. The fall of the Berlin wall integrated the then divided city Berlin. After the fall of the wall, Berlin transformed into a very progressive global city.

This is a new paradigm shift from our Spanish colonial practice of "intramuros" (within the walls) for the "Illustrados and Principalia" and "extramuros" (outside the walls) for the "indios," "sanglays" and peasants in 16th to 19th century, or the American post war 1950's planning/zoning by segregation of income class and land uses, gated low density single family houses. The obsolete practice of zoning by segregation has resulted in our disjointed and fragmented cities, towns, and communities. We shape our environment and our environment shapes us.

My professors at Harvard Graduate School of Design state that 21st century will be Inclusionary zoning. Previous century was exclusionary zoning.

'RE' century

21st century will also be a "RE" century; Renewal, Redevelopment, Reuse, Recycle, Re-connect, Rebound, Reform, Rebirth and, I hope, Urban Renaissance. This urban redevelopments will likely happen in the "Inner Ring" suburbs built in the 1950's and 1960's, the post war suburbs which are today in the middle of central cities of the metropolis.

In 1995, the American Planning Association declared that single family detached houses in low density gated communities in the middle of cities as "monster homes" having larger environmental/carbon footprints because they prevent more families to live closer to their places of work, thereby encouraging more urban sprawl to encroach into the forests and farms.

Shelter is considered a vital need. Nonetheless, housing has become an unsustainable element, with rents and housing prices skyrocketing beyond the means of many.

Evidently, one's income has not kept pace with the escalating living costs such as transportation, health treatments, childcare, and particularly housing.

Finding a decent place to stay in is becoming more and more difficult for the middle-income earning Filipino. The result is most Filipinos live away from their places of work, only a privileged few live close to business districts.

The average worker or executive working in the Makati Central Business District spends more than 1000 hours a year, three to five hours a day in traffic. Elsewhere in the more progressive cities of the world; workers, employees, and executives commute to work less than 300 hours a year. Imagine the millions of man-hours we lose and the air pollution from cars, buses, and jeepneys.

Disparities

An extreme challenge in Metro Manila is that there are pockets of prosperity in the midst of so much poverty.

There are disparities between very low density single family home, gated communities, the middle class in faraway suburbs and informal settlements. Almost 90 percent of the occupied housing units are single houses, mostly owned by the more affluent close to the Central Business District (CBD).

Places close to the business districts and their vicinities provide low-density, high-cost housing, a problem to middle-income earning Filipinos who mostly work in the city but live far away.

Residential developments have opted to segregate income classes; subsequently isolating lower-income households in older, poorer neighborhoods very far away from their places of work because that is the only place they can afford to be.

Although there is improvement in the water and electric facilities, decent housing for the urban poor households has been left behind.

Apart from the problem of housing affordability, there are also problems in the lack of housing supply and accessibility, especially in the CBD's, which is surrounded by low-density single family residences.

Metro Manila's population at daytime balloons to 14 million and 11 million people at night, resulting in air pollution due to transport vehicles, rush hours, traffic congestion and long hours of commuting for a greater number of people.

In the Makati CBD, the daytime population is reportedly 11 times the nighttime population. The jobs and housing imbalance, or residential deficiency is estimated to be 35,000 to 50,000 dwelling units. By 2032, the deficiency is estimated to be 140,000 to 200,000 dwelling units.

Inclusionary for diversity

One of the remedies to these problems is "anti-snob zoning" or inclusionary housing, a residential development that not only provides housing for the high-income bracket, but also caters to the middle to low-income.

It requires developers to include affordable homes when they build a particular number of market-rate homes. Inclusionary housing and mixed-income housing, rely on a strong residential market to create below-market units.

This kind of development assimilates families from every income to create a vibrant neighborhood and alleviate economic segregation. Inclusionary housing provides better accessibility to the need of every family—vicinity to transportation terminals, place of work, and social services and access to better schools and hospitals.

Inclusionary zoning and mixed-income housing integrates what traditional zoning segregates—young families, retired and elderly households, single adults, and households of all types.

Inclusionary housing includes a portion of the development at values that low to moderate-income people can manage to pay for. In return, developers are given a density bonus, which gives them permission to build more units that local zoning regulations would normally permit.

Filipinos have been used to the norm of isolating and concentrating the poor outside the social mainstream, mixed-income housing presents an opportunity for other families to embrace low-income earning Filipinos and bring them back into the social sphere. This kind of residential development creates affordable housing away from the concentrated neighborhoods of poverty.

Inclusionary practices

The anti-snob zoning in Massachusetts consents local zoning and land use regulations to be superseded if at least 25 percent of the residential developments were Inclusionary houses.

In the Philippines, Ayala Alabang allotted one of their seven districts, District 2, for employee housing where residents enjoy the same benefits as the other higher income neighborhoods.

Inclusionary impact

Inclusionary housing can be incorporated, by transforming single family homes into multi-family townhouses or garden apartments like those in progressive cities close to or within business districts, together with the high-rise office and commercial buildings. Instead of constructing low-density developments in the proximity of these districts, developers could build or use old buildings into affordable multi-family housing units, homeowners could transform from their single family homes to multi family residential developments. With this, local businesses will have a larger workforce near their places of work, which will further promote more opportunities in commercial establishments and other businesses. It will boost local economic development by creating more staff housing and by stabilizing the income of moderate and low-income households.

Urban decongestion will prevent problems like flooding, waste disposal, road density, and traffic jamming. Transportation, utilities and urban services will now be spread equally, coping with the overpopulation and hasty growth.

Inclusionary housing does not only aid low and moderate-income individuals but provide them with housing they can afford; it also helps create integrated neighborhoods where households from different professions and social backgrounds live within the same community.

(The author is founder of Palafox Associates. This article reflects his personal opinion. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph.)

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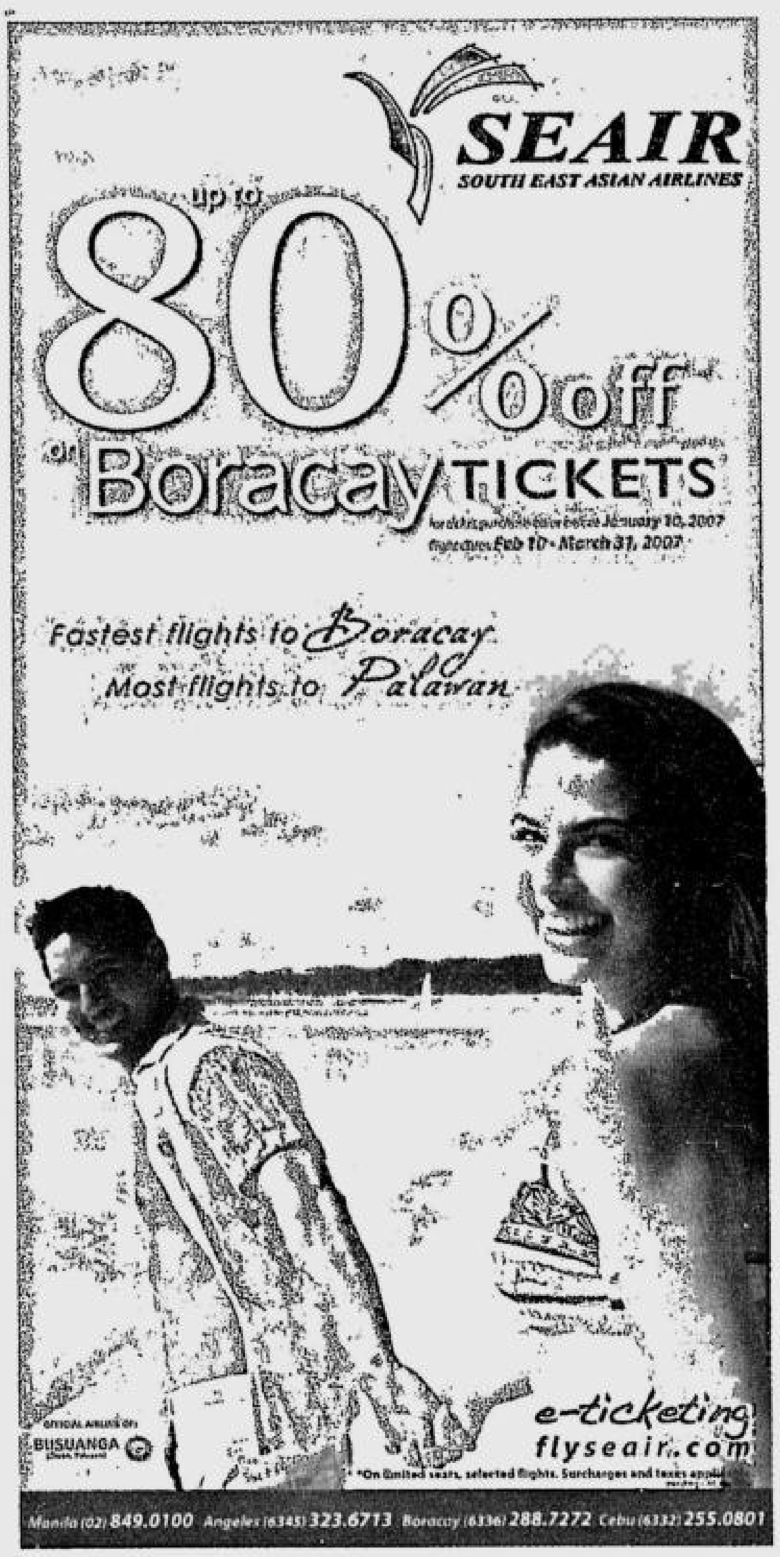
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Corporate Securities Info

Raul Palabrica

BETWEEN NOW AND MARCH, the accountants and corporate secretaries will be busy preparing the year-end reports that their clients are required to submit to the regulatory agencies.

It's an annual ritual that corporations have to go through under pain of administrative or penal sanctions.

Although the fines imposed for failure to meet reportorial requirements may, for some companies, not be a cause for concern, the stain that attaches to the omission is something that professionals prefer to avoid.

Word about less than conscientious performance could have adverse effects on the reputation of the errant accountant and lawyer.

What reports should be prepared and to which office they should be submitted to depends on the nature of the business.

Primary license

For corporations whose relationship with the Securities and Exchange Commission is limited to the certificate of registration (or primary license), the following reports must be submitted:

- Financial statements;
- General Information Sheet;
- Compliance with by-laws provisions on number of directors, their qualifications and compensation, dividend declarations and inspection of the corporate books.

Through these documents, the SEC can determine whether these corporations comply with the law's minimum requirements for legitimate operation.

In addition, the public can take a look at these records if they want to know more about the operation of the corporation or the people running it.

For these reasons, the law requires the accurate and timely submission of these reports.

Accountants could lose their accreditation with the SEC (or even their license) if they are found to have misrepresented the facts and figures of the financial statements.

Neither will lawyers who falsely certify to the truth of their submissions be left off easily. They—and their clients—will not be spared disciplinary action for that offense.

Secondary license

The reportorial requirements are more stringent for corporations that, in addition to the certificate of registration, were issued a secondary license by the SEC.

In this category are financing companies, investment companies, investment houses, pre-need companies, broker-dealers and stock (or trading) exchanges.

The common denominator of these companies is, they sell stocks, securities, and other financial instruments to the public on the promise that they will receive profits or other forms of financial benefit sometime in the future.

Aside from the Corporation Code, these companies are governed by specific laws, such as, the Securities Regulation Code, Investment Houses Law, Financing Company Act and Securitization Act of 2004.

The SEC exercises direct supervisory authority over these corporations.

They cannot, unless expressly exempted by law, sell, promote or distribute their products to the public without prior clearance of the SEC.

These companies are required to submit monthly, quarterly, operational and annual reports, depending on the nature of their business.

If the circumstances call for it, the SEC can compel them to submit certain reports within a 24- or 48-hour notice.

The requirements on accuracy and timely reports equally apply to these companies, and with more vigor on account of the sensitive nature of their business.

Other licenses

Corporations that are grantees of secondary licenses or franchises from other government regulatory agencies are treated differently.

Banking and quasi-banking institutions, building and loan associations, trust companies and financial intermediaries, insurance companies, public utilities, educational institutions and those governed by special laws are supervised by the government office that issued their secondary license or franchise.

Insurance companies are supervised by the Insurance Commission. The National Telecommunications Commission looks over telephone companies.

These corporations are obliged to file with the SEC only the kind of reports that companies that hold primary licenses or certificates of registration are required to submit.

All other kinds of reports that relate to the operation of these specially-regulated companies have to be filed with the government office that issued them secondary licenses to operate.

The information in this column may be read in full in SEC Memorandum Circular No. 11, Series of 2003. Feedback at rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

Hyundai names winners in the 2006 Dealer of the Year Awards

Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI), the exclusive distributor of Hyundai vehicles in the country, gathered all its dealers for its 2006 Dealer of the Year Awards (DOYA) at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3. Accentuating the event with "hot latin" theme, HARI dealers danced the night away with the latin music of the Guarana band.

Ma. Fe Perez-Agudo, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of HARI, expressed her gratitude to the dealers. "What would have taken a decade or so to carry out, we have pulled off in only five years because of our committed dealers who are Hyundai's greatest ambassadors in South East Asia".

Among HARI's 32 dealers nationwide, Hyundai E. Rodriguez, Sr. Avenue bagged the 2006 DOYA as well as other awards in various categories: Award of Excellence in Vehicle Sales in Metro Manila and the Award of Excellence in Service Operations. The Award of Excellence in Vehicle Sales in the Provincial category was awarded to Hyundai Cebu, Inc. Hyundai La Union received the Award of Excellence in Parts Operations, while Hyundai Commonwealth Ave. was bestowed with the Award of Excellence in Fleet Sales Management.

Individual awards were also conferred to the sales consultants and parts personnel who have exerted commendable performance in their posts. The Sales Consultant of the Year Award was bestowed to Wilma V. Bantugan of Hyundai E. Rodriguez, Sr. Avenue for Metro Manila category and to Hohmer C. Soriano of Hyundai Dagupan for the provincial category. Abigail M. Ibanez of Hyundai Laguna, Inc. was awarded as the Champion, Parts Personnel of the Year, followed by first runner-up Lolito C. Chua of Hyundai E. Rodriguez.

The Dealer of the Year Awards (DOYA), an annual event organized by HARI, honors dealerships and individuals who have given exemplary contributions to Hyundai's growth in sales, after-sales service, and parts operations.

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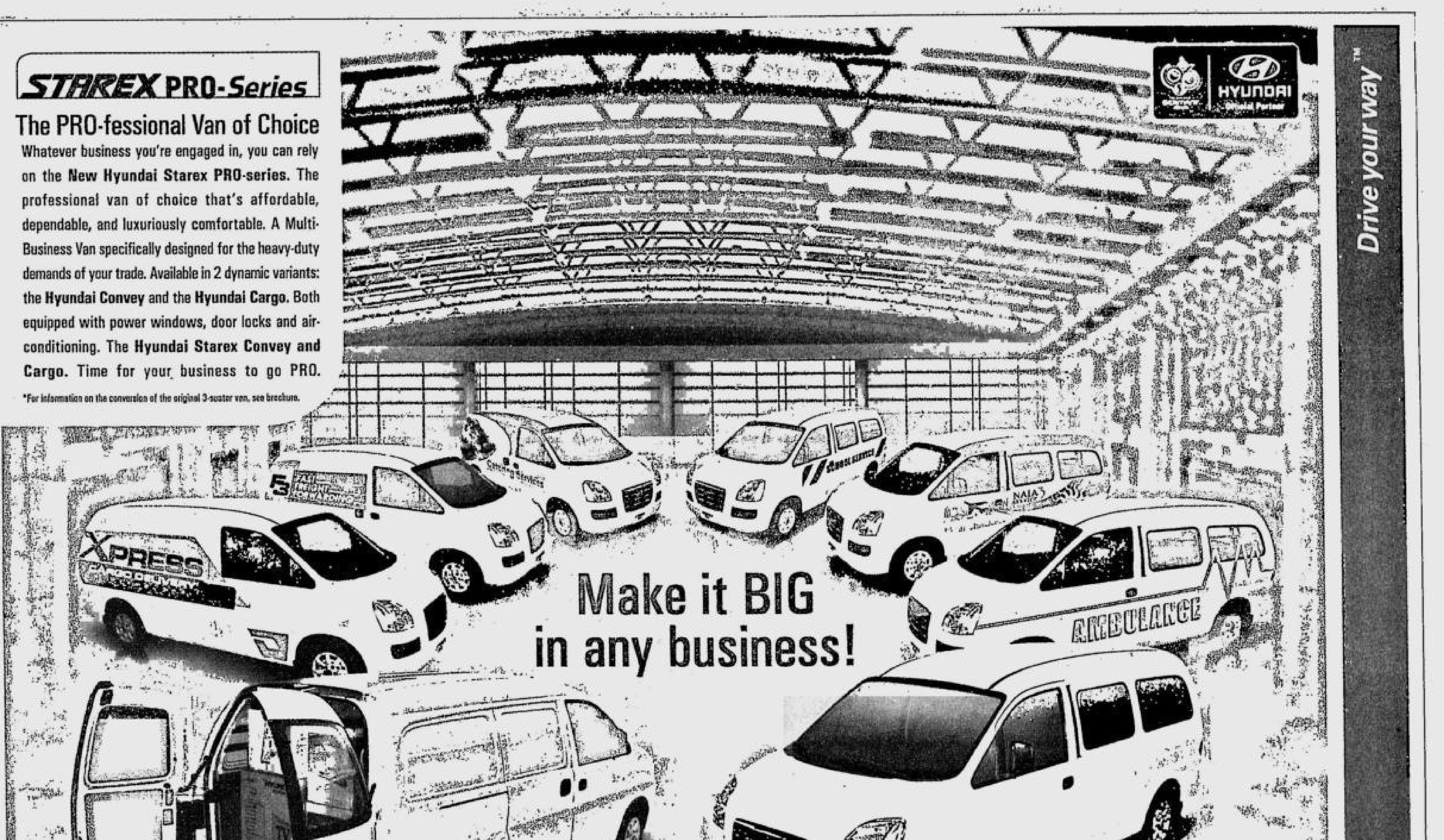

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- **Rediscovering** Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero /D4

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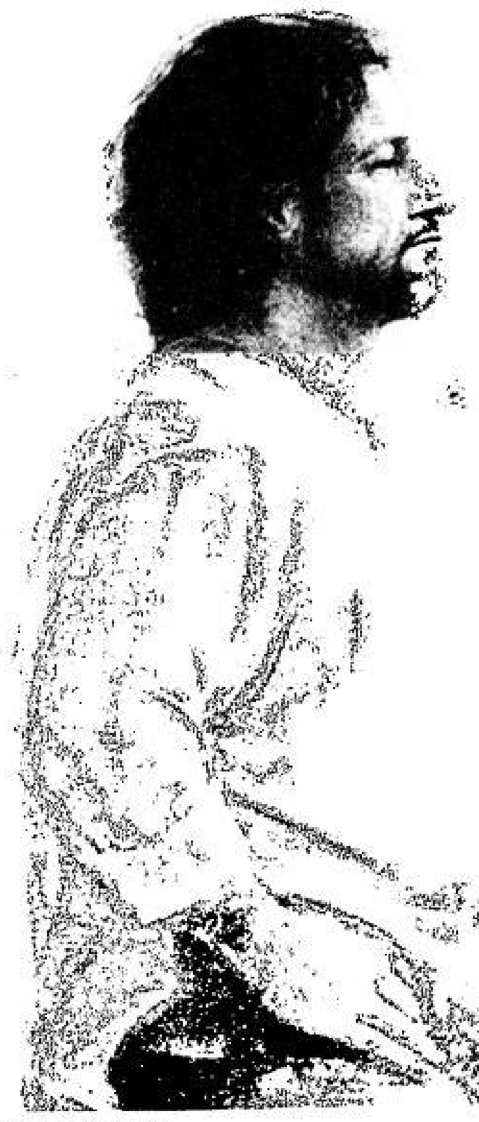
Art of the 'carpe diem'

Mia Herbosa seizes the day



"SPANISH Profile"

By Victoria T. Herrera
Contributor

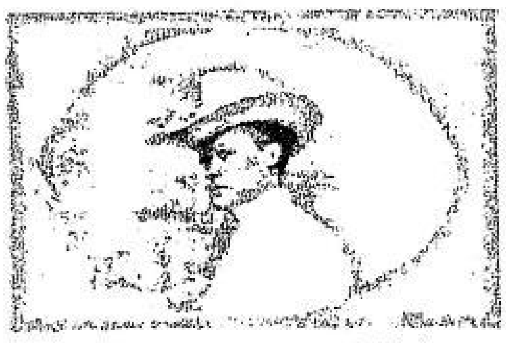
THE HOLLYWOOD FILM "Dead Poets Society" (released in 1989) popularized the Latin phrase "carpe diem" to the youth of the 1990s as a call of admonition to live life to the fullest.

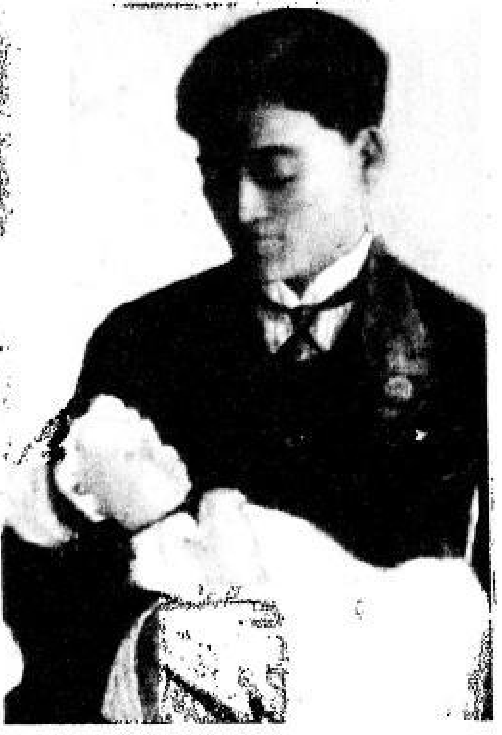
Mia O. Herbosa, now in her 30s, belongs to that same generation to whom this call had perhaps the most meaning then. In her exhibition at the Alliance Française de Manille, she appropriates this phrase as title but with a different twist.

Now a young mother, Mia has further developed into an introspective artist. Instead of adopting the authoritative tone to "seize the day," she quietly "takes a journey" (the literal translation of the Latin word "carpo") to reflect over her life story.

The artist's personal introduction to the exhibition relates a particular fascination over her great-grandfather, Alfonso Ongpin, whose personal art collection was instrumental in introducing her to the arts. She writes:

"Growing up, I often stared at the many wonderful oil paintings on the wall of my *lola*'s home... Though his (Alfonso's) beloved collection is now no longer intact, I feel, in a great way, his passion for art and beauty has left its mark on his family... He captured his world to share with us today. In my own way, I try to capture mine. In this way, both worlds come together, bridging the gaps of time, sharing a place in the fourth dimension. Carpe Diem."





"ALFONSO Ongpin" (above and right)

Ongpin is recognized for his contribution to Philippine art both as a collector and a gallery owner. He was one of the founders of the first commercial art supply store in the country. He later opened his own store and art gallery. Ongpin was also self-taught in painting restoration. Some works traced back from his collection still have the inscription "Restaurado por A. Ongpin" on the reverse of canvases.

ART/ C3

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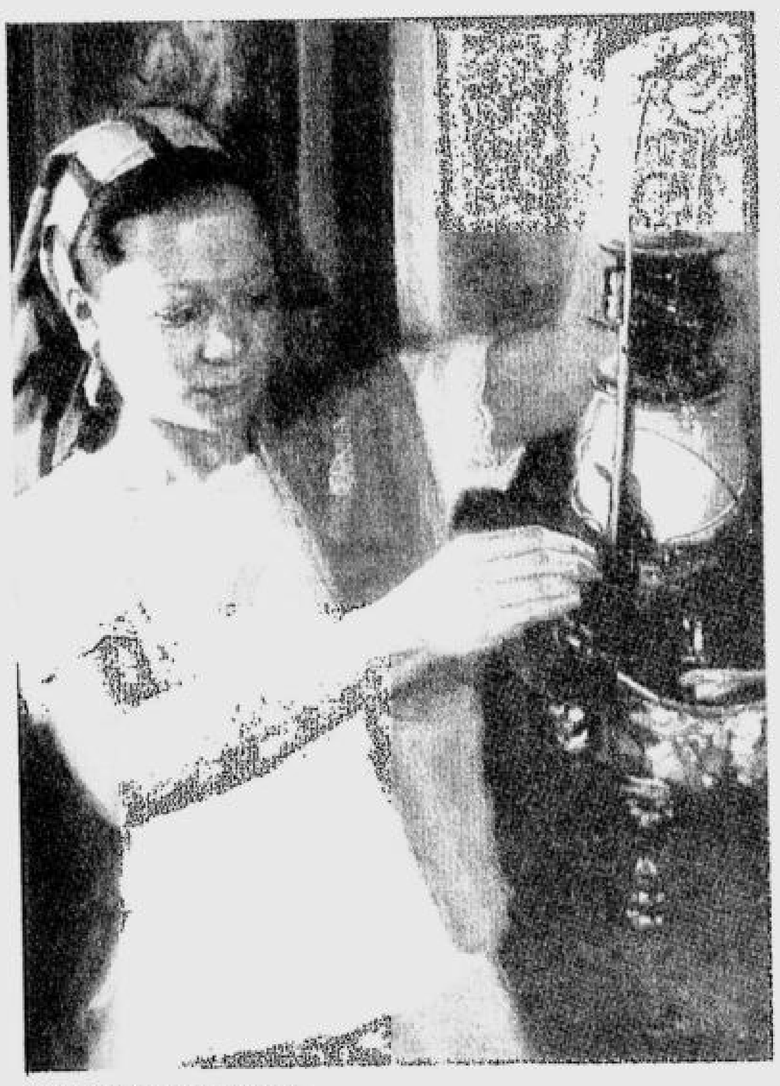
Cebuano artist looks back—and forward


"SHOW Them the Light"

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

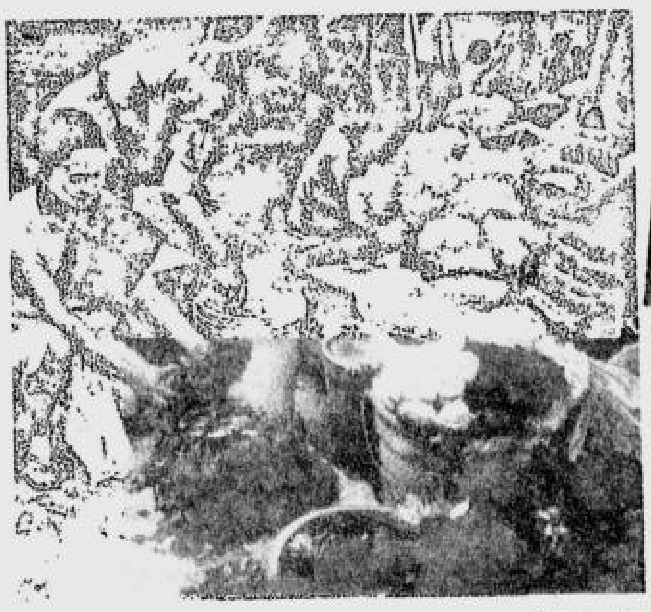
HE COMES FROM THE SOUTH, BORN in the island of Basilan, and raised in Cebu City, where, amid humble surroundings, he was exposed to art early. Today, Adeste Deguilmo is an artist of the people with whom he shares an affinity for the pursuit of a better, and more humane, life. His passion for art has not diminished a bit.

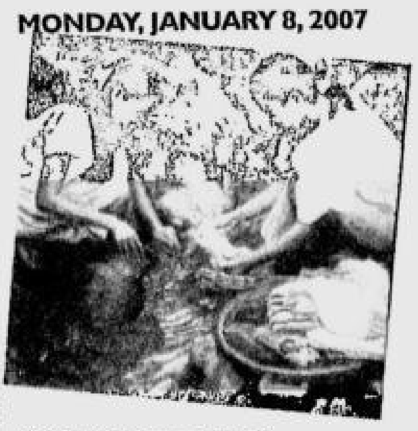
In his seventh solo show (his first ever in Metro Manila), titled "Memories of a Race," (Art Gallery, 3/F The Manila Peninsula Hotel, Makati City, opening Jan. 12-14), Adeste (his abbreviated signature) returns to his past, the wellspring of his artistic life, extolling the good old virtues that our people have to imbibe in this crucial period of history where survival is utmost in our national agenda.

Adeste has sprung from the land that has bred the likes of Martino Abellana, Romulo Galicano, Sofronio Mendoza, Dominador Subang and Gig de Pio, all of whom have risen from their humble origins and through dint of hard work and God-given talent have all made a name. The images he has chosen to depict on his canvases are indeed timeless as they are timely: all that is beautiful about the Filipino inside out.

Hyperrealism

Guided by a pervasive sense of hyperrealism that is far from being contrivedly photographic, Adeste radiates a glow that is lyrical yet moving, the tableau of personages at work exuding the intimacy of a lived-in existence.

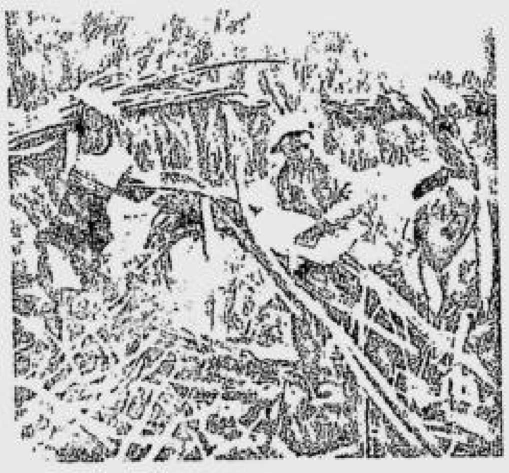

"TRES Marias"


"YOUNG Lavanderas"

A graduate of fine arts of the University of the Philippines-Cebu, Adeste has first-hand knowledge of the subjects he captures in their most casual moments: blind musicians in an open concert, flower vendors brimming with joyful countenance, sakada workers caught in daily toil; young laundrywomen trading gossip by the gurgling brook.

These images may initially seem superfluous to the trained eye who eschews the panoply of local color by way of cultural fare. A paradox may, however, spring surprises, as the artist's dynamic brushwork so conveys, far removed from the true, the good and the beautiful. And all the endearing qualities of the Filipino come to the fore—love of work, of family, of the good and gentle light, so fittingly conveyed by the woman who lights up the room with her *gasera*.

What redeems Adeste's nostalgic foray into the past is the strong spirit of collective endeavor which has, time and again, brought out the best in our countrymen. The Filipino is never alone, never idle, never without a family nor a clan to work for and share blessings with. This message of solidarity, ringing more eloquently in an age of self-centered, indeed selfish pursuits, may be the one saving grace that will lead us to the portal of the Great Brown Hope.


"HARVEST"

E-mail author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com.

The new face of the Angono artist

By Constantino C. Tejero

ANGONO, THAT LAKE TOWN in Rizal province, has long been reputed as a breeding place of artists. Here art is very much a part of the everyday activities of the townsfolk.

This is probably the only provincial town in the country that has engendered two National Artists, Carlos "Botong" Francisco for the Visual Arts and Lucio San Pedro for Music. Francisco's artistic descendants such as Perdigon Vocalan, José "Pitok" Blanco and Nemi Miranda Jr. have consolidated that reputation.

It also inadvertently reinforces the belief of culture snobs that nothing much can come out of this town aside from Filipinism and folk art. They regard with disdain this phenomenon of art as cottage industry.

So, it was a rather radical shift when the Angono-based artists' group Surrounded by Water first turned up with their avant-gardist works. Led by Wire Rommel Tuazon, the group has always been among those on the forefront of contemporary Philippine art.

A third generation of Angono artists has gathered in a multimedia group called Neo Angono Artists Collective, composed of painters, visual artists, musicians, writers, theater people, cultural workers. These contemporaries have not really cut their roots in Francisco and San Pedro, but they are moving on.

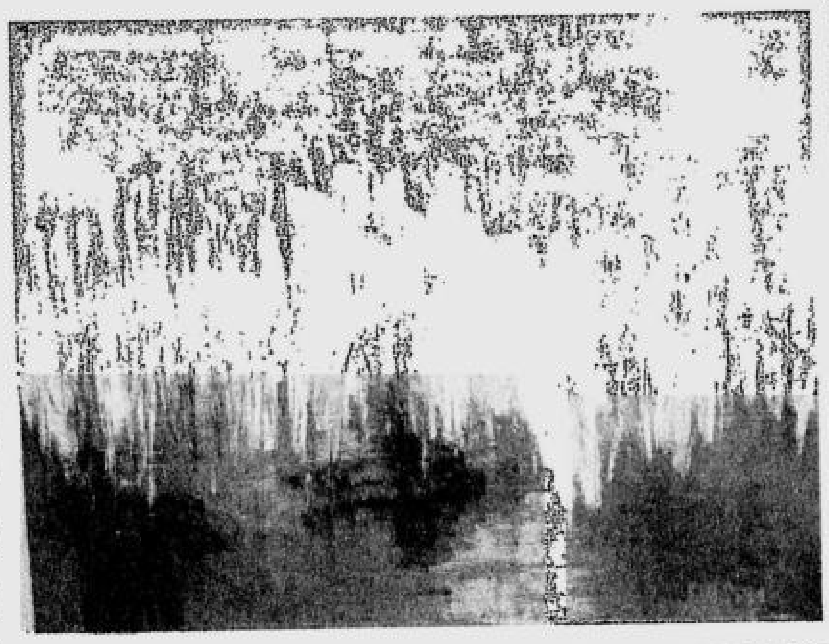
A lesser-known contemporary of Tuazon, who also took up Studio Arts, major in Painting, at the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, is Aaron Bautista. Here is one of those who may be regarded as the face of the new Angono artist.

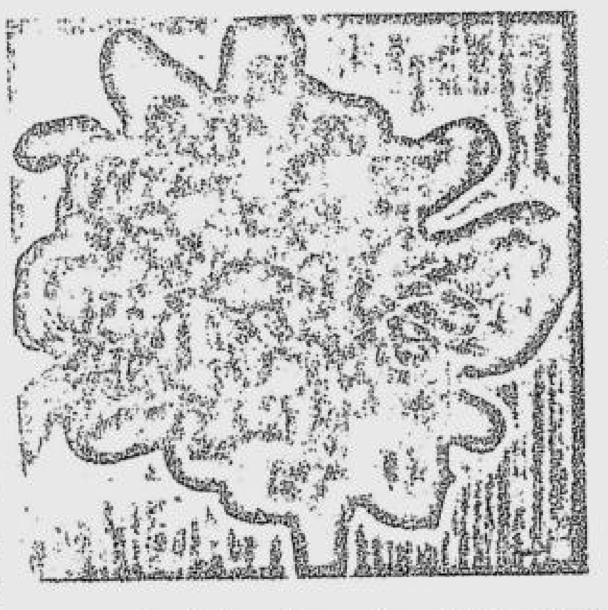
Consider his exhibit "Concrete Perception," pieces in mixed media on canvas, recently at the Philamlife Center, United Nations Avenue, Ermita, Manila.

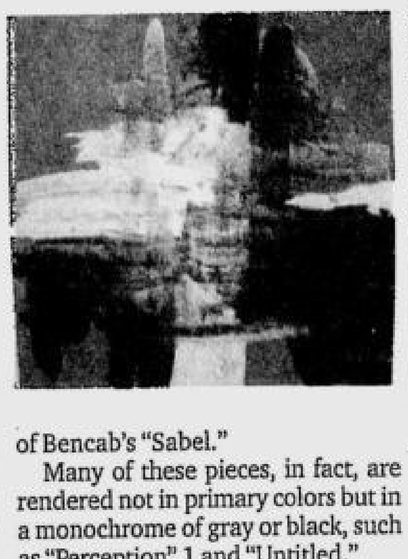
Bautista had done traditional painting, gone through Social Realism and Figurative Expressionism, before shifting to Abstract Expressionism three years ago. He cites as influences on his latest work such master abstractionists as Pollock, De Kooning, Gerhard Richter.

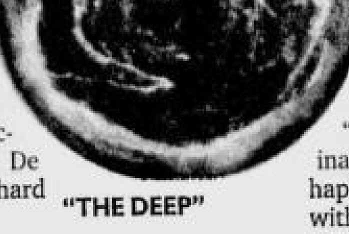
The exhibition note describes these pieces as "experiment in the use of primary colors to dramatize and feel the ambience of warm color fields, psychedelic trance, forgetting and reclaiming."

We don't know about the "forgetting and reclaiming" part as that's too personal only the artist can elucidate on it.


"RICHTER'S Scale," by Aaron Bautista


"WALLFLOWER"


"CONCRETE Perception" 2


"THE DEEP"

As for the experiment in primary colors, only one piece, "Richter's Scale"—with its downward slashes of yellow and planes of blue and red, like earth and sky sundered by light—would seem to illustrate that.

"Wallflower" is dominated by red on slate-blue, but with its central image of what looks like an amoeba, a pool of blood or a take on Warhol's flower, it's more like an experiment in form rather than in color tonality.

Another piece, "Obstruction," is dominated by red pigment haphazardly applied, with black splotches on edges, but again we wouldn't say this is color experimentation.

Lovelier is "Concrete Perception" 2. With its sweeping strokes of gray and black on a background of blood-red gradating into flame-red, this looks like an abstract rendition of Bencab's "Sabel."

Many of these pieces, in fact, are rendered not in primary colors but in a monochrome of gray or black, such as "Perception" 1 and "Untitled."

The most exquisite of this monochromatic abstraction is the circular piece "The Deep," done in cobalt-blue, green tinges, gray spattering and ochre at the edge. It's like looking not at the bottom of a well but of a porcelain bowl.

Looking at these pieces, one can very well appreciate how this young Angono artist is trying to go as far away as possible from Botong Francisco.

VISUAL ARTS

"AFTER the Rain"

Asia Art Gallery opens at Mall of Asia

THE SONG of Life

The 27th one-man show of top artist James Onglepho will open the new Asia Art Gallery at the SM Mall of Asia. The new gallery is located at unit 2113 of the Entertainment Mall, tel. 9013062.

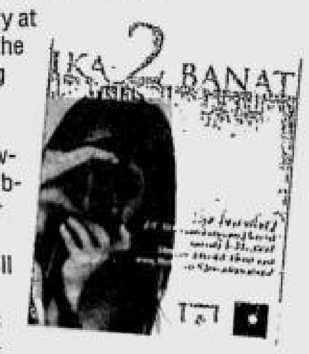
Bandoy at Mag:net

Mag:net Gallery Paseo (Paseo Center, Paseo de Roxas corner Sedeno Street, Makati) presents an exhibit by Argie Bandoy "Seasoning the Obese," Jan. 10-30. The exhibit features Bandoy's recent oil-on-canvas paintings, collages and works on paper. Call 8177895 or e-mail magnetplus@gmail.com or visit www.magnet.com.ph.

Photo exhibit at Ricco Renzo

Ricco Renzo Galleries and Caffe (LRI Business Plaza, 210 Nicanor Garcia St., Bel-Air 2, Makati) presents the first one-man exhibit of photographer Gabriel Nivera titled "Destinations," Jan. 17-Feb. 12. The exhibit features 45 works/photos of Nivera on his trips abroad. Call 8982542 to 43 or visit www.riccorenzo.com.

Photo exhibit at Greenhills

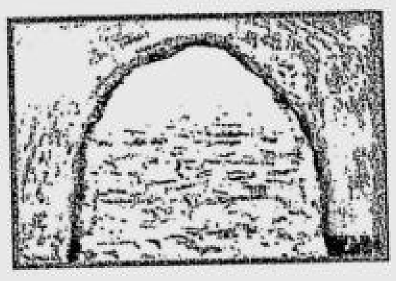


The Jewellery Gallery at the second floor of the Greenhills Shopping Center is holding "Ikalawang Banat; Flickristas@The Jewellery," a photo exhibit. The photos cover life studies, nature, urbanscape, and still life. The photographers are members flickr.com, a photo-sharing site owned by Yahoo!. The show runs from up to Jan 31.

Philippine medicine history conference

The Miguel de Benavides (Central Library) of the University of Santo Tomas is holding the First International Conference on the History of Medicine in the Philippines Jan. 9 and 10 at the Antonio Vivencio del Rosario Heritage Section of the library, UST campus, España, Manila. Organized with the UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, the oldest medical school in the country, the conference is convened by Fr. Angel Aparicio, O.P., UST prefect of libraries and Dr. Raquel Reyes of the Department of Southeast Asia and the Islands of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. The conference aims to bring together for the first time a diverse range of health-science professionals, scholars, archivists and librarians to explore the history of medicine in the Philippines from the 16th-20th centuries. Conference fee is P1,000. Call the UST Miguel de Benavides Library (7313034; 4061611 local 8234); or UST Faculty of Medicine and Surgery (7415314; 4061611 local 8239).

Modesto at Ayala



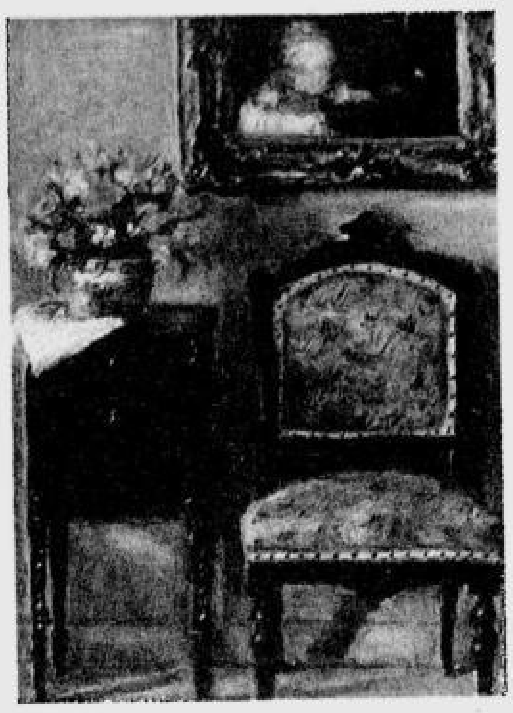
Fernando Modesto's "Manipulation of History" will run Jan. 9-22 at the Museum Space, Ayala Museum Makati Avenue, Makati City. A number of the paintings depict Modesto's familiar dappled field of pastels, of blues and greens, some flowing from a narrow panel, in others a face is superimposed. Modesto says these faces are those of Buddha though they appear more to be generic shorthand for the familiar human form. Abstract painting revels much in such shamanism. But Modesto attempts to raise this veil of so-called mystery, not as much as to reveal the mechanics of this "deception," but rather to affirm this submission as a needful tactic of faith, to believe what one sees, or rather what one believes to be seeing. These are often interpreted as metaphors from where timeless myths are born. Modesto has an Architecture degree from the University of Santo Tomas and had studies at Central St. Martin's School of Art and Design in London. He has extensively exhibited internationally since the 1970s.

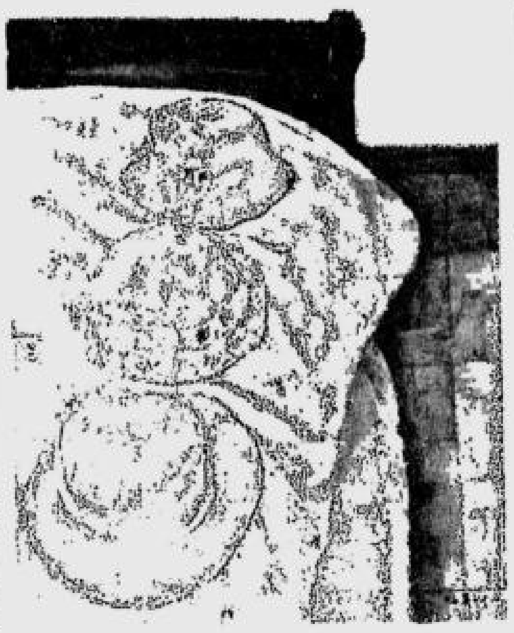
Campus press history exhibit at UST Museum

The UST Museum of Arts and Sciences will open "The Varsitarian at 80: The Struggle and the Glory of the Campus Press," Jan. 16 at 9 a.m. The exhibit is a run-up to the 2008 celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Varsitarian, the official student paper of UST and the only campus paper to have an entry in the Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia of the Arts for having produced top journalists, writers and even National Artists. The exhibit is also part of a broader museum series on the history of printing in the Philippines. On the same day, UST officials and Varsitarian alumni will also formally inaugurate the new Varsitarian office at the UST Tan Yan Kee Student Center. Call 4061611 loc. 8235.

Kidlat Tahimik at Lopez Museum

The Lopez Memorial Museum will hold "Artist's Talk with Kidlat Tahimik" Jan. 20, 2 p.m. The world-renowned filmmaker will talk about his experience in Ifugao teaching a village community to document its practices, some of which are fast disappearing. One of the take-off points for the talk is a life-sized rattan woven mannequin, wearing a red Ifugao G-string, which welcomes viewers to Lopez Museum's current exhibition, "Fuzzy Logic: Art and Technology." As viewers approach the figure with his "bamboo camera," they will see themselves in his lens. The Lopez Museum is at the ground floor of the Benpres Building, Exchange Road and Meralco Avenue, Pasig City. Call 6312417 or e-mail lopezseum@skyinet.net.


"SALA"


"THREE Hats"

Art of the 'carpe diem'

From page C1

Photography

In this exhibit, Mia gives us a glimpse of another of Alfonso's interests—photography. His grandchildren—the artist's mother Elaine O. Herbosa, and aunts, Deanna Ongpin and Cynthia O. Valdes—remember the many self-portraits in photographs their grandfather had accumulated through the years.

And it is from this collection of autobiographical images that the young artist had selected two portraits to recreate a connection with her Lolo Poncho.

One of these shows Alfonso carrying his firstborn son Luis. Both are dressed to the hilt, possibly for the infant's baptism.

The other portrait is more intimate in scale and candid in pose. Alfonso, wearing a white hat and shirt, looks away from the lens. Curiously, Mia frames his image in an eye-shaped inner frame.

She adds a new element in these portraits—a fabric collage in the background. One may think of the crafty techniques in scrapbooks but her handling is subtle and refined, almost blending with the painted surfaces. It may be to remind one of the very personal roots of these images.

We actually see the subject—Alfonso—through his own eyes as well as through the eyes of his great-granddaughter, three generations later. These portraits are not merely copies from existing photographs but are Mia's personal projections of a beloved ancestor.

Mia trained for 12 years in the Art Students' League in New York. There she earned three certificates for completing full programs in painting, printmaking and sculpture, each four years long. She felt most comfortable in the League's informal teaching approach—"where a beginner paints beside advanced colleagues."

Her journey in art school developed a keen mastery for human subjects and their distinct personalities. The head drawings and nude paintings on exhibit show Mia's talent to capture individual characters.

The five graphite drawings are especially engaging even with minimal details. They are not simply facial and anatomical studies. She imbues in them a state of mind and a sense of place.

Lessons from past

Mia continues to value lessons learned from the past. In this exhibit, she incorporates ideas and techniques of European artists. In her "Self-portrait at Thirty-six," she employs the reflected image on a mirror to create an illusion of three-dimensional space, reminiscent of elements in the works of Jan van Eyck and Diego Velasquez. Unlike her earlier self-portraits, she is more candid with her image as an artist by showing herself in action and directly gazing at us. She depicts her mother, Elaine, also an artist, in a similar fashion, without the mirror but with canvases hanging and cropped in the background.

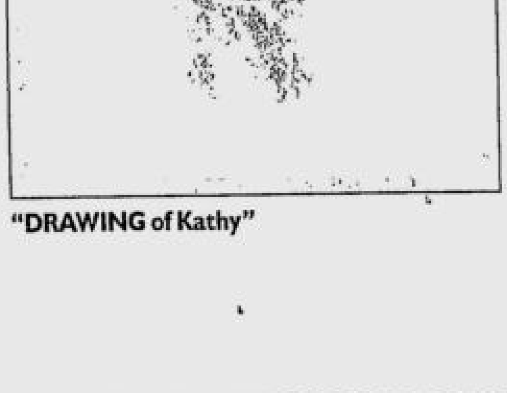
Mia also pays tribute to Dutch and Flemish masters known for their tradition of still life painting in the 17th century. Popular among private collectors, these paintings were ideal for domestic spaces. They were carefully composed to look ordinary—a disheveled fabric covering the cloth or draping diagonally from the wall, a jar or bottle lying diagonally on the table, fruits scattered or dangling at the edge.

Her still-life paintings are autobiographical, like a personal essay. It brings us viewers to ask what connections can be made. It assumes the importance of the everyday and the ordinary. Objects in each canvas were carefully chosen and composed. They may seem common things but they are her "precious necessaries" that represent a phase in the artist's life, a season of the year, or a time of day. A pair of red shoes and a row of summer hats introduced to us her 4-year-old daughter Lana. The choice of flowers may refer to different times of the year spent in her studios in New York and in Manila.

Traditionally, still lifes were viewed in Northern Europe then as symbols of material wealth. For Mia, however, it is more of a wealth of blessings. Still life as a subject matter is also taken as a memento mori. It reminds us of our mortality and of time fleeting away. And this brings us back to the idea of carpe diem. Making the most of the opportunities, Mia captures what is before her—a life blessed with family, a career, and a past that has connected with her present.

Mia O. Herbosa's works are on view until Jan. 12 at Alliance Française de Manille Total Gallery, 209 Nicanor Garcia St. (formerly Reposo), Bel-Air II, Makati City. Call 8957441 or 8957585 (Olivier Dintinger/Earl Parco) or 0917-890-1219 (Elaine Herbosa) or visit miaherbosa.com

The author is assistant professor at the Department of Art Studies, College of Arts and Letters, UP Diliman.


"DRAWING of Kathy"

Beauty queens visit Gamaba collection at Tesoro's

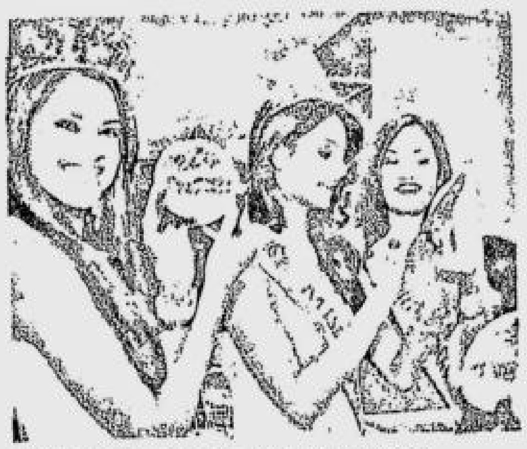
IT WAS A CRASH COURSE ON Philippine indigenous arts and crafts when the newly crowned Miss Earth 2006 Hil Yesenia Hernandez of Chile and her court of environmentally conscious beauties visited Tesoro's Mabini recently to view the Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan (Gamaba) Collection. Joining Hernandez were the runners-up: Miss Earth-Fire Marianne Puglia Martinez of Venezuela, Miss Earth-Air Amruta Patki of India, Miss Earth-Water Catherine Untalan of the Philippines and finalist Francys Sudnicka of Poland.

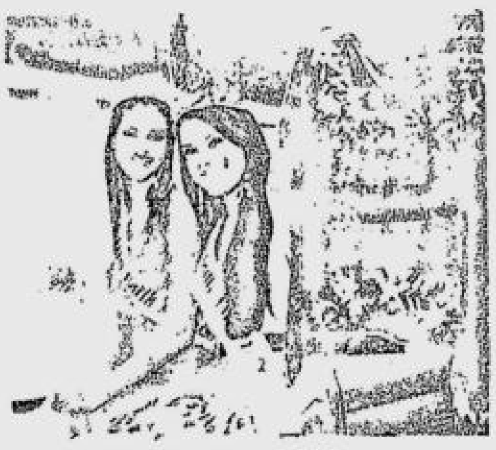
UP professor Norma Respicio briefed the beauties about Gamaba and the collection. The Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan or National Living Treasures Award is the ultimate honor in the realm of indigenous arts conferred by the Philippine government through the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). The Gamaba Committee is the NCCA's body that searches the entire archipelago to bring recognition to a member of a local community who best exemplifies that group's highest achievement in a unique and native art form.

MASTER cutter Lydia Navarro takes Miss Earth's measurement for her custom-made gown.

ADMIRING the Child Jesus image of embossed and chased silver by National Living Treasure awardee Eduardo Mutuc of Pampanga

In collaboration with Tesoro's, the pioneer in Philippine handicrafts, the NCCA and the Gamaba Committee sponsored the creation of an exhibit highlighting the works of the 11 National Living Artists. So that indigenous arts and exceptional mastery in the fields of Hanunuo Mangyan script and poetry, Sama mat-making, Tausog tapestry, Bagobo *inabal* and T'boli *t'nalak* weaving, Kalinga traditional performing arts, Maguindanao, Yakan, Pala-wan music, Sulod Bukidnon epic chanting, Kapampangan metallurgy may become better known by the public, the exhibit is open seven days a week, ongoing till August 2007. Admission is free.


THE MOTHER-OF-PEARL products of Tesoro's draw admiration from the beauties.


TESORO'S embroidered chiffon cape blouses get the ladies' approval.

MULTICOLORED mat of Haja Amina Appi

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PROMO MECHANICS

A. PROMO PERIOD: JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2007

B. PURCHASE REQUIREMENTS:

1) You can participate in the nationwide raffle promo by submitting the required EQ packs such as EQ Basic (with 100% Breathable Cover and Side Leak Guards), EQ Plus, EQ Colors and EQ Dry (with Cloth-like Cover) in an envelope, together with the information sheet that contains your name, address, contact numbers, signature and your baby's name, birthday and age.

2) Entries can be submitted through a) drop boxes deployed in selected supermarkets/groceries nationwide; b) major Jollibee Party Stores; and, c) mailing or hand-carrying to JSU Office, Inc. at the following branches:

1) JSU MAIN OFFICE
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc.
31st Floor Raffles Corporate Center
Emerald Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City

2) JSU CEBU
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc. – Cebu
Lot 2 Blk. 9 M.L. Quezon Ave. Castalex
Compound, Cabangcalan, Mandaue City, Cebu

3) JSU CDO
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc. – Warehouse
Kevin Ent. Warehouse Zone 4 Bayabas Road,
Cagayan de Oro City

3) One (1) RAFFLE ENTRY is equivalent to any following EQ packs:

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EQ Basic/ EQ Plus Mini Packs (4s)	2
EQ Basic/ EQ Plus Budget Pack (12s)	1
EQ Basic/ EQ Plus Big Pack (36s, 32s, 28s, 24s)	1
B. EQ Colors Baby Diapers	
EQ Colors Mini Packs (4s)	2
EQ Colors Budget Pack (18s, 16s, 14s, 12s)	1
C. EQ Dry Baby Diapers	
EQ Dry Mini Packs (4s)	2
EQ Dry Travel Pack (22s, 20s, 18s, 16s, 14s)	1
EQ Dry Econo Pack (40s, 36s, 32s, 28s)	1
EQ Dry Jumbo Pack (60s, 54s, 48s, 42s)	1
EQ Dry Mega Pack (84s, 72s)	1

4) Each submitted envelope should contain the number of packs required for one (1) entry. Winning envelope with incomplete number of packs shall be disqualified.

C. RAFFLE PRIZES:

1) Each winner will receive one (1) Jollibee Birthday Party Certificate worth Six Thousand Pesos (P6,000) and one (1) Birthday Party Cake certificate worth Five Hundred Pesos (P500).

D. DRAW SCHEDULES:

1) Entries shall be classified according to the five (5) areas: NCR, North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.
2) You will be required to drop your entries within the area covered by your mailing address. Otherwise, winning entries shall be disqualified. (e.g. 123 Gov. Pack Rd. cor. Upper Session Rd. Baguio City should be submitted at any North Luzon dropbox centers only).
3) Deadline for submission of entries and corresponding draw dates area as follows:

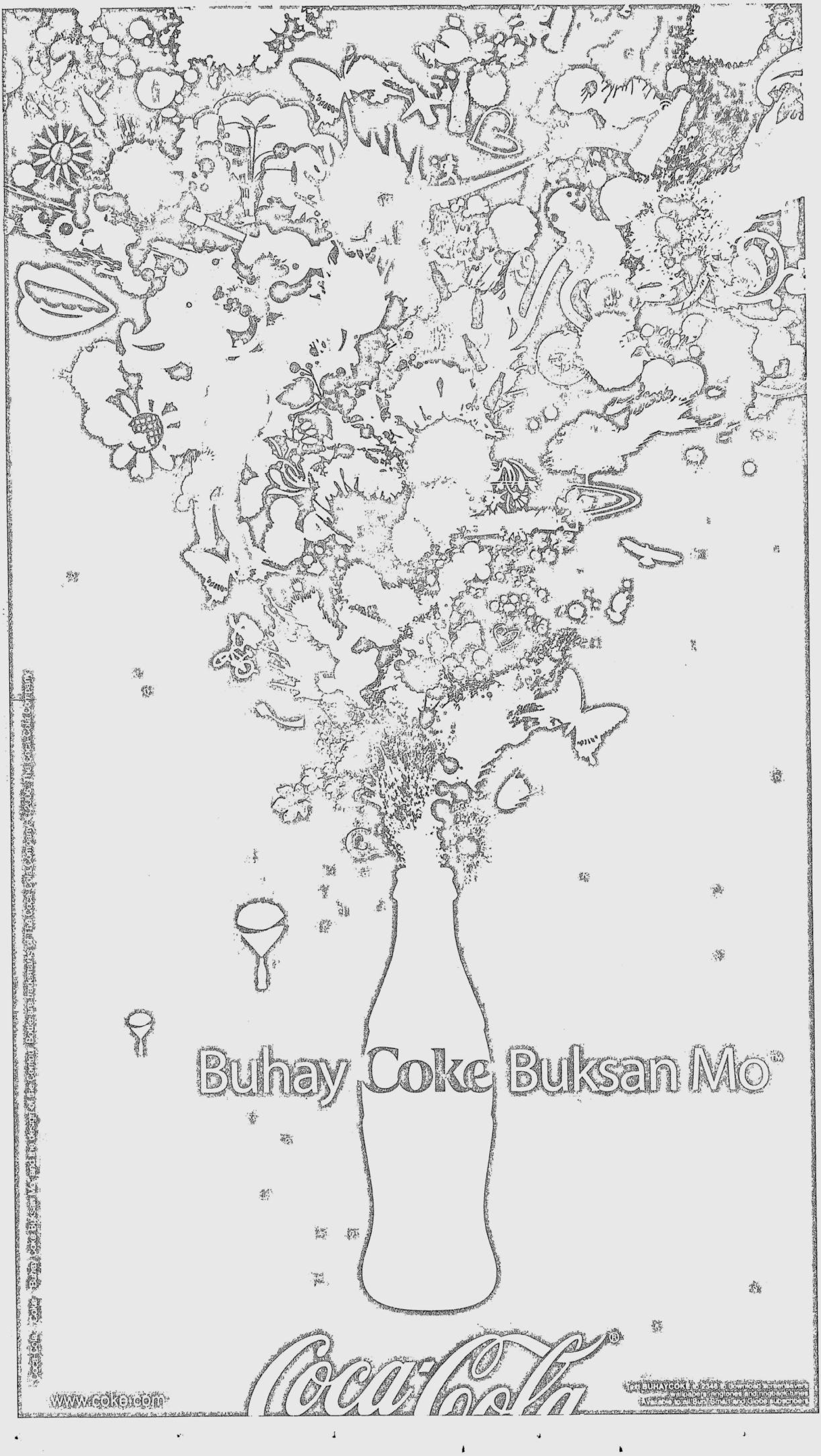
	Deadline of Submission	Draw Date	No. of Winners
1st Monthly Draw	Jan. 31, 2007	Feb. 9, 2007, 3PM	50 winners
2nd Monthly Draw	Feb. 28, 2007	Mar. 9, 2007, 3PM	50 winners
Grand Draw	Mar. 31, 2007	Apr. 10, 2007, 3PM	100 winners

4) All entries will be drawn at the following JSU Offices at exactly 3 o'clock in the afternoon and will be attended by JSU and DTI representatives.
a) For GMA and Luzon Entries - JSU Pasig Warehouse
b) For Visayas Entries - JSU Cebu
c) For Mindanao Entries - JSU CDO
5) For the 1st and 2nd Monthly Draws, 10 Free Birthday Packages will be given in each of the 5 areas (i.e., GMA, South Luzon, North Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao). For the Grand Draw, 20 Free Birthday Packages will be given per area.
6) Promo participants can only win once within the entire promo duration. Non-winning entries in the 1st and 2nd Monthly Draws will still be included in the Grand Draw.
7) Entries thru mail will only be accepted until the following date and time for each draw.
a) 1st Draw: February 8, 2007, 5PM
b) 2nd Draw: March 8, 2007, 5PM
c) Grand Draw: April 10, 2007, 9AM

E. CLAIMING OF PRIZES:

1) Winners in each draw will be announced in major broadsheets.
2) Within a week after each draw, all winners will be informed via a NOTIFICATION LETTER which will be delivered straight to their houses courtesy of JSU's event partner, Worklink. Worklink shall present all the acknowledgement receipts to JSU.
3) Winners can claim their Jollibee birthday party certificates from February 8, 2007 to October 31, 2007 at any of the specified JSU offices near their location.
a) After the redemption period, JSU shall mail the prizes through a courier service group.
b) Said service partner shall present the acknowledgement receipts to JSU.
4) Winners will be asked to present their notification letter plus 2 valid IDs for verification purposes.
5) Winners can use their birthday party certificates at their chosen Jollibee party store from February 8, 2007 to December 31, 2008 only.
6) Prizes are transferable but not convertible to cash.
7) Employees of UNITRADE and JOLLIBEE, its advertising agencies and suppliers, including their relatives up to second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the Raffle Promo.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4960, Series of 2006.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Tenor Carreras upstages New Year's Eve fireworks in Taipei

The newly married Spanish tenor led the countdown to 2007

SPANISH tenor Jose Carreras (center), visits Taipei 101, the tallest building in the world, with his wife, right.

By Nancy T. Lu, *Contributor*

WHILE MOST YOUNG PEOPLE JAMMED THE COMMERCIAL area near Taipei 101, the tallest building in the world, to catch the spectacular once-a-year fireworks on New Year's Eve, a more mature crowd made up mainly of lovers of classical music, including top corporate executives from the financial and banking sector, joined world-class tenor Jose Carreras at a memorable New Year's Eve countdown at the Taipei Arena on Dec. 31.

This was not the first time for Carreras to be working on the last day of the year. As he put it, "I have done it many times on New Year's Eve but not on Christmas Eve."

The Barcelona-born song artist for the special occasion—holding a glass of wine—broke into a drinking song for a duet from Verdi's "La Traviata" titled "Brindisi" at the stroke of midnight. Soprano Giorgia Fumanti joined him in the hearty singing.

As a Spaniard, Carreras described how his countrymen usually celebrate the arrival of the New Year: "New Year's Eve dinner is from 9 p.m. to midnight. With every stroke of the clock during the countdown, you pop a grape into the mouth."

Darting laser beam

Carreras, wearing a tuxedo, touched his listeners as he sang his heart out at the Taipei concert, which started later than usual at 10 p.m. The program, which also featured the Evergreen Symphony Orchestra, the National Experimental Chorus and the Tunhua Elementary School Chorus, was interrupted to make way for the dramatic countdown.

This portion, which led to the climax, started with Carreras performing "White Christmas." Singing with him were Fumanti and the Tunhua Elementary School Chorus. The children's angelic voices then broke into "Panis Angelicus." The orchestra played a special arrangement of Christmas carols as the excitement built up. The countdown proceeded with darting laser beam indicating the seconds left of the old year.

Then "Happy New Year" was flashed on the stage. At that precise moment, 2007 balloons were released. Confetti, too, rained on the spectators. The crowd tried to burst the balloons by stepping on them, creating what sounded like firecrackers.

The program featuring Carreras, one of the Three Tenors, opened on New Year's Eve with Strauss' "Die Fledermaus" Overture. Then Carreras began vocalizing in his powerful but caressing voice the Christmas carol, "Adeste Fideles." He later sang more Christmas carols like "O Holy Night," "The Drummer Boy" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

Carreras' repertoire also included Schubert's "Mille Cherubini in coro," Alvarez's "Pregaria," and Liguori's "Tu ascendi dalle Stelle." Among the traditional selections were "El Cant dels Ocells," "La Virgen lava panales" and "Lulajze Jezuniu, Dormi o Bambino."

Carreras, who arrived in Taipei with his wife whom he wed only last summer, turned 60 last Dec. 5. Of his future, he said: "New recordings are planned. And I would like to go on singing in concerts for a few more years."

He also cited a personal interest in seeing through one plan: "As my roots are in the opera and on the stage, I am going to sing in an opera production with a great score—Eugen D'Albert's 'Tiefland.' The opera is based on a Catalan play titled 'Terra baixa' by Angel Guimera. As a kid, I used to watch the play. The opera has a demanding role for a tenor."

Carreras will likewise continue to work on a project close to his heart and that is to help leukemia victims through his foundation.

"I also want to spend time with my family and my wife," he said. "I want to have a personal life besides my career."

After his unforgettable tryst with his thousands of Taipei fans, Carreras flew to Hong Kong for more concerts.

Cellist makes his mark; 'After Aida' opens

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

THURSDAY NIGHT LAST WEEK, CELLIST Victor Michael Coo made a landmark recital unheard of in Manila's concert scene: to devote an entire program to unaccompanied cello repertoire.

Doing a solo unaccompanied recital was tough enough but doing contemporary works (from Warshaw's Desert Call to Kodaly's Sonata Op. 8) alongside Bach's Suite No. 3 in C Major was indeed too daunting to contemplate.

But then, of course, it helped that Coo explained the works he was playing.

At the end of the mind-boggling 30-minute Kodaly Sonata Op. 8, a thoroughly ecstatic audience rose to their feet to give the cellist a rousing standing ovation.

In my book, no Filipino cellist living or dead could come close to that performance. Someone mentioned that the equally gifted Chino Bolipata, who was admired by no less than Yo Yo Ma, played a movement of the Kodaly sonata many years ago.

The first time Coo tried the unaccompanied program was when he was finishing his master's degree in Maryland, USA, and it was well received.

That prompted him to continue doing unaccompanied recitals. But the first time, he admits, was nerve-wracking as he had the whole stage to himself and had no support usually given by the pianist.

The danger of doing solo pieces is that a recitalist may find it too convenient to feel too free with the work to the extent that the structure of the piece might be lost.

"Some pieces really require a certain amount of physical stamina while others more of mental stamina," Coo said. "Balance of the two would be the ideal preparation."

A curious piece in the program was Dalit Warshaw's "Desert Call," which has overtones of the Middle East sounds. Warshaw and Coo were in Fontainbleau, France, a few years back and the Filipino cellist got to hear the piece as played by another cellist. In one benefit concert in New York, the cellist was asked if he was interested in working on the piece "Desert Call." That started his collaboration with Warshaw.

"We cannot stay in the comforts of standard repertoire," he said. "Having a challenge on a new piece and collaborat-

CELLIST/ D3

VICTOR Michael Coo

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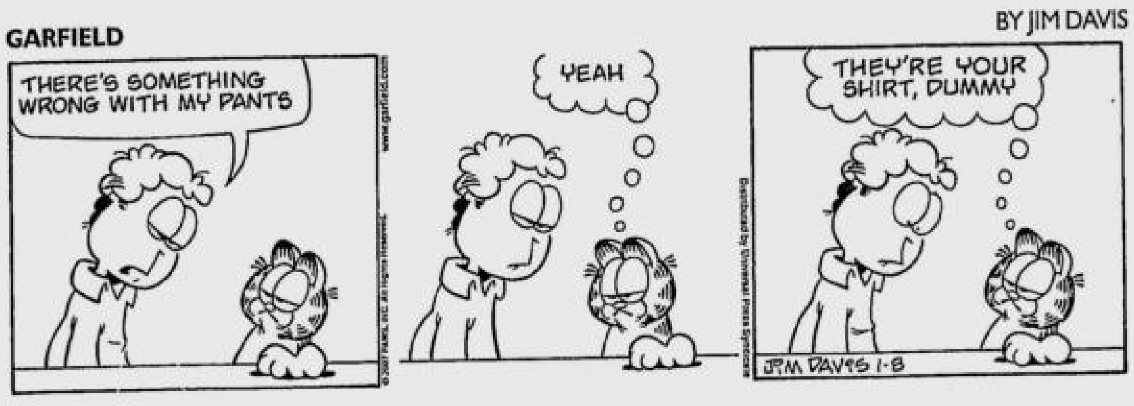
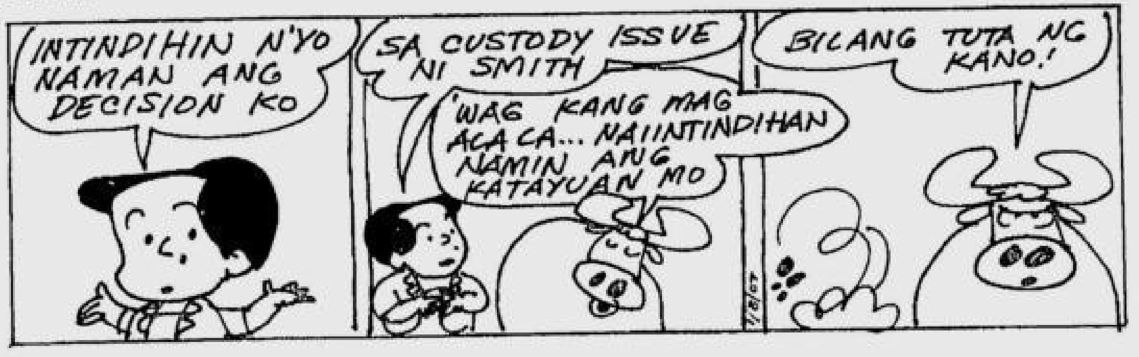
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY PANTS
YEAH
THEY'RE YOUR SHIRT, DUMMY
JIM DAVIS 1-8

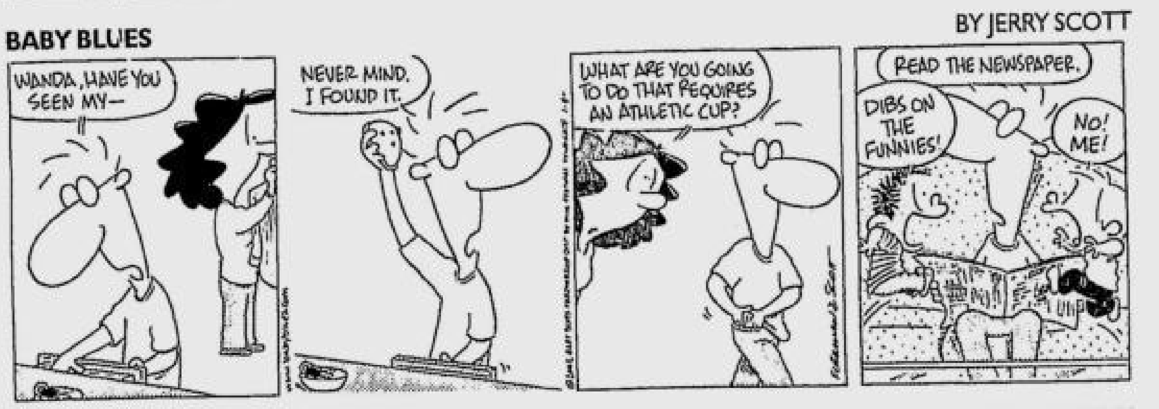
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


INTINDIHIN N'YO NAMAN ANG DECISION KO
SA CUSTODY ISSUE NI SMITH
'WAG KANG MAG ACA CA... NAIINTINDIHAN NAMIN ANG KATAYUAN MO
BILANG TUTA NG KANO!
1/8/07

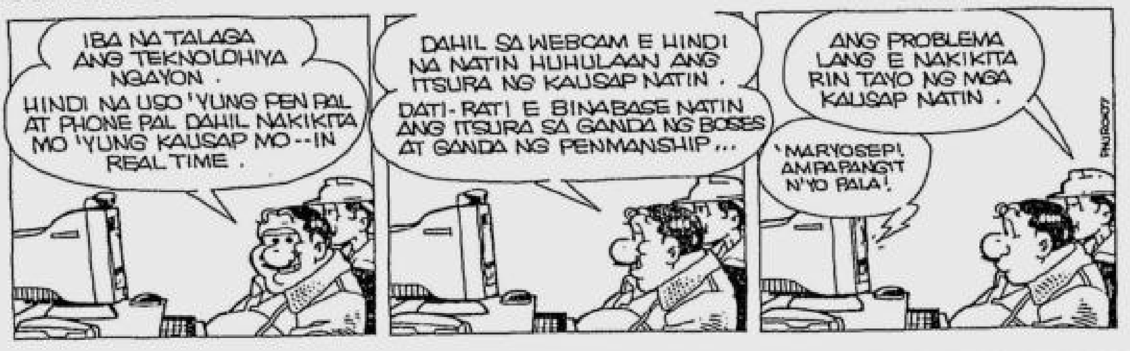
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


WANDA, HAVE YOU SEEN MY—
NEVER MIND. I FOUND IT.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO THAT REQUIRES AN ATHLETIC CUP?
READ THE NEWSPAPER.
DIBS ON THE FUNNIES!
NO! ME!

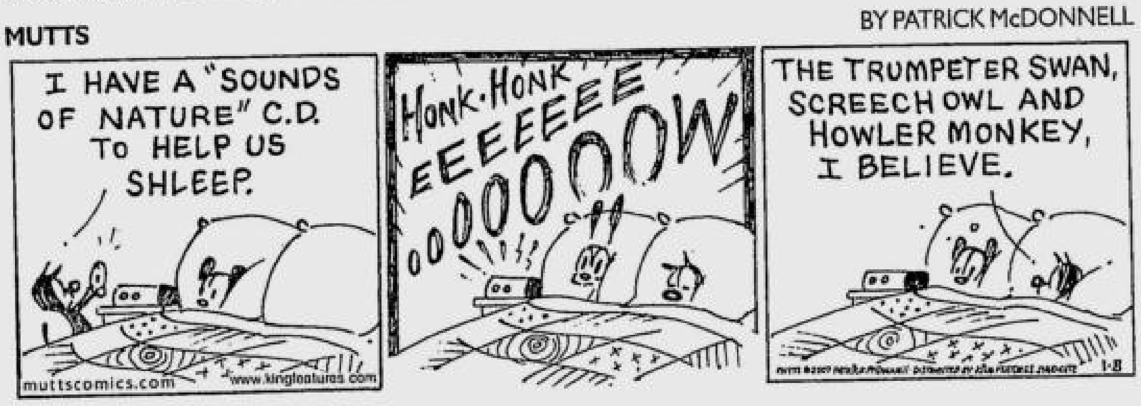
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


IBA NA TALAGA ANG TEKNOLOHIYA NGAYON.
HINDI NA USO 'YUNG PEN PAL AT PHONE PAL DAHIL NAKIKITA MO 'YUNG KAUSAP MO--IN REAL TIME.
DAHIL SA WEBCAM E HINDI NA NATIN HUHULAAN ANG ITSURA NG KAUSAP NATIN.
DATI-RATI E BINABASE NATIN ANG ITSURA SA GANDA NG BOSES AT GANDA NG PENMANSHIP...
ANG PROBLEMA LANG E NAKIKITA RIN TAYO NG MGA KAUSAP NATIN.
'MARYOSEP! AMPAPANGIT N'YO PALA!

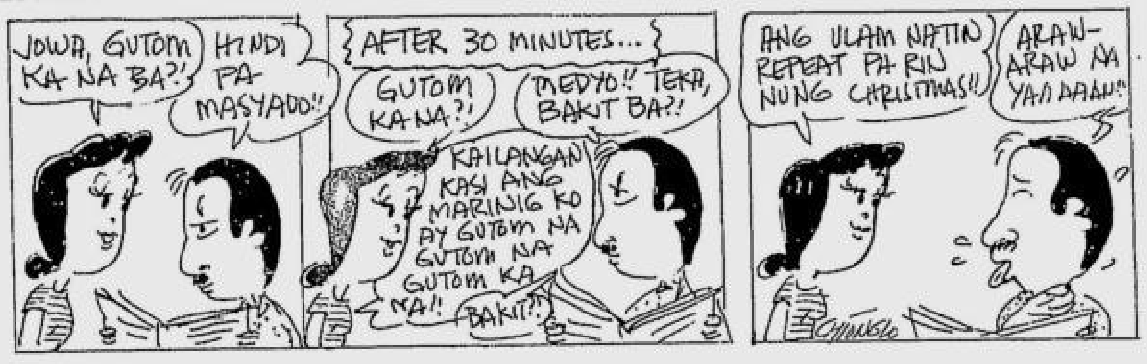
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I HAVE A "SOUNDS OF NATURE" C.D. To HELP US SHLEEP.
HONK·HONK
EEEEEEE
oOOOOOOOW
THE TRUMPETER SWAN, SCREECH OWL AND HOWLER MONKEY, I BELIEVE.
1-8
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com

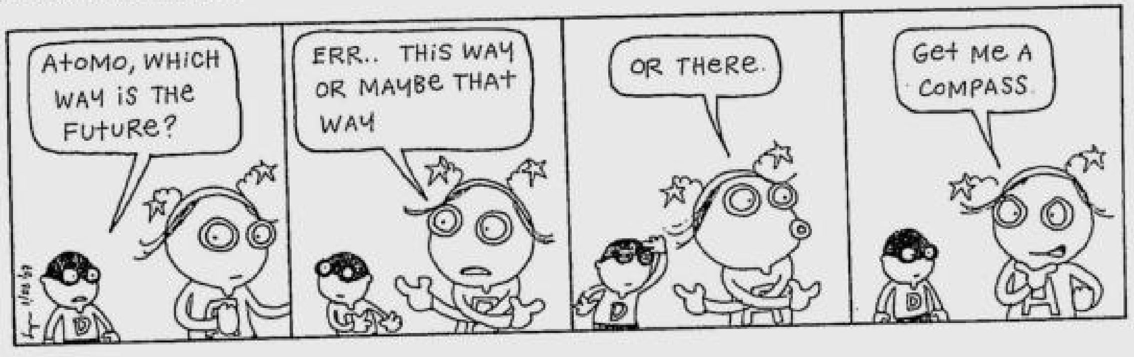
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, GUTOM KA NA BA?!
HINDI PA MASYADO!!
AFTER 30 MINUTES...
GUTOM KA NA?!
MEDYO!! TEKA, BAKIT BA?!
KAILANGAN KASI ANG MARINIG KO AY GUTOM NA GUTOM NA GUTOM KA NA!!
BAKIT?!
ANG ULAM NATIN REPEAT PA RIN NUNG CHRISTMAS!!
ARAW-ARAW NA YAN AAAH!!
CHIONGLO

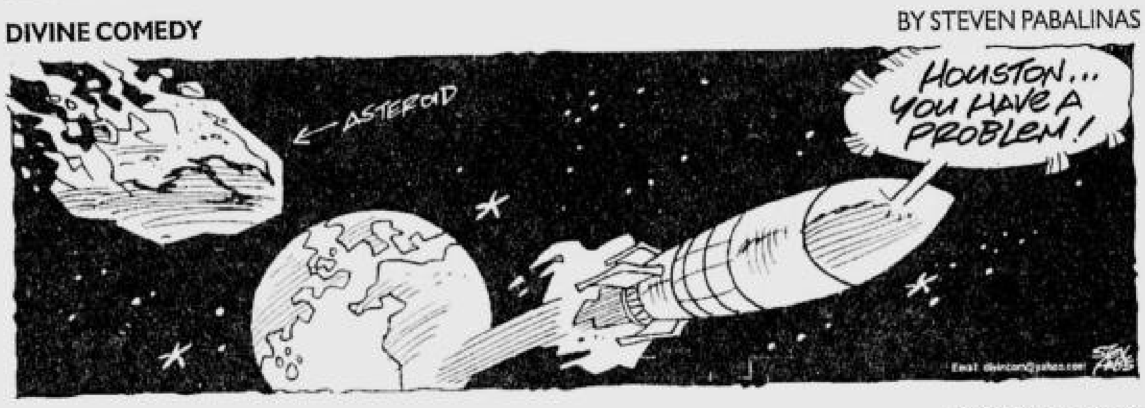
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


AtoMo, WHICH WAY is THe FuTURe?
ERR.. THiS WAY OR MAYBE THAT WAY
OR THeRe.
Get Me A COMPASS.

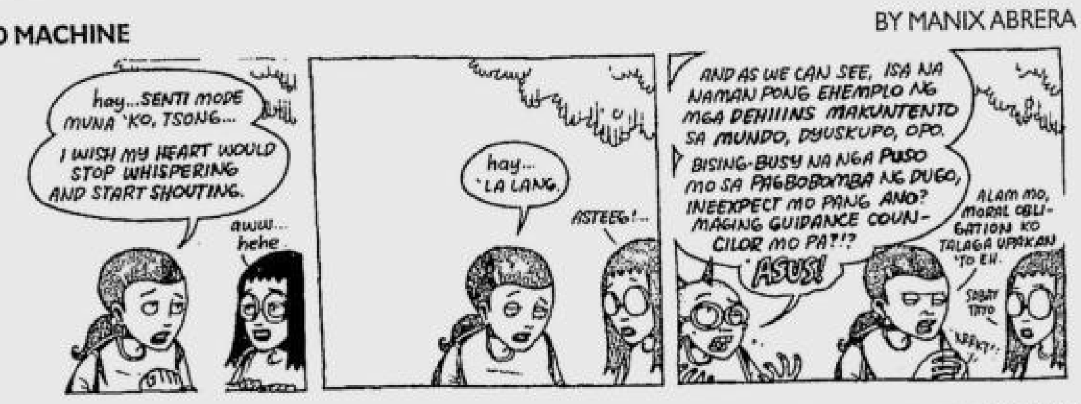
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ASTEROID
HOUSTON... YOU HAVE A PROBLEM!

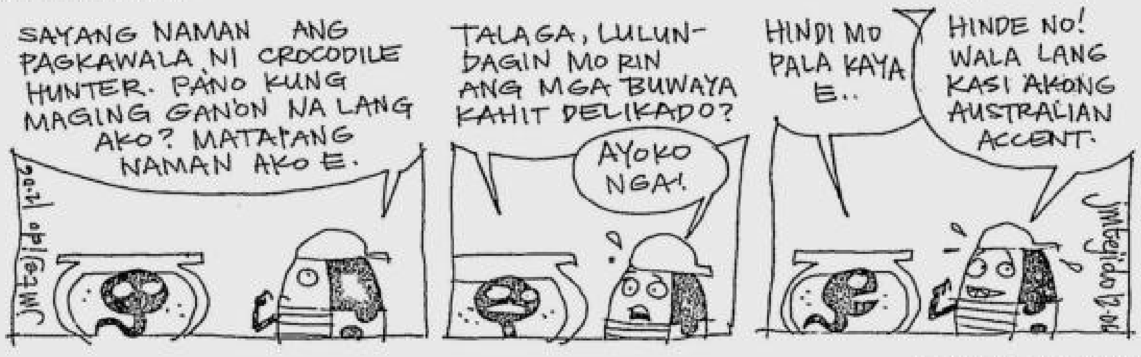
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hay...SENTI MODE MUNA 'KO, TSONG...
I WISH MY HEART WOULD STOP WHISPERING AND START SHOUTING.
aww... hehe
hay... 'LA LANG.
ASTEEG!...
AND AS WE CAN SEE, ISA NA NAMAN PONG EHEMPLO NG MGA DEHIIINS MAKUNTENTO SA MUNDO, DYUSKUPO, OPO.
BISING-BUSY NA NGA PUSO MO SA PAGBOBOMBA NG DUGO, INEEXPECT MO PANG ANO? MAGING GUIDANCE COUNCILOR MO PA?!?
ASUS!
ALAM MO, MORAL OBLIGATION KO TALAGA UPAKAN 'TO EH.
SABAY TAYO

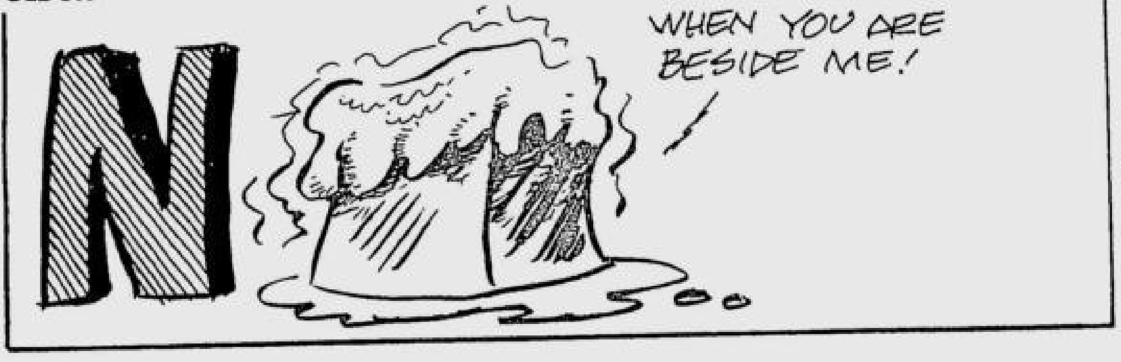
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SAYANG NAMAN ANG PAGKAWALA NI CROCODILE HUNTER. PANO KUNG MAGING GAN'ON NA LANG AKO? MATAPANG NAMAN AKO E.
TALAGA, LULUNDAGIN MO RIN ANG MGA BUWAYA KAHIT DELIKADO?
AYOKO NGA!
HINDI MO PALA KAYA E..
HINDE NO! WALA LANG KASI AKONG AUSTRALIAN ACCENT.
JMTejido

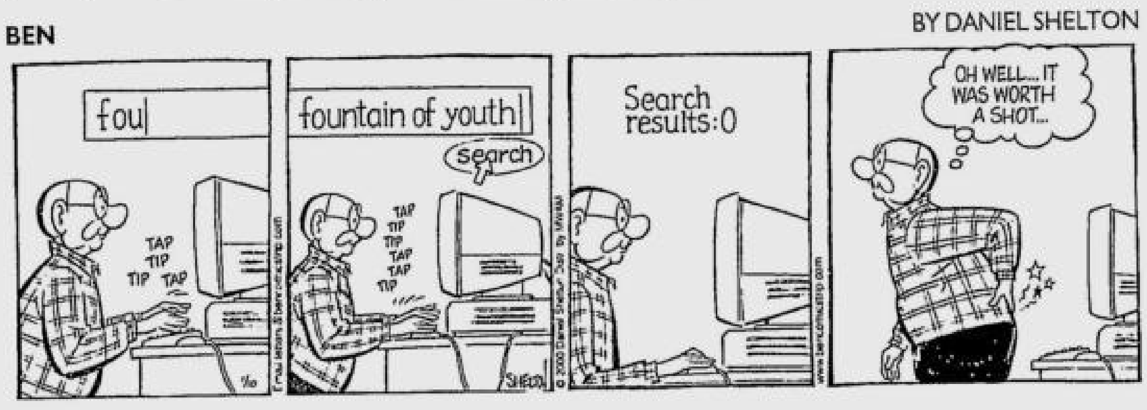
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

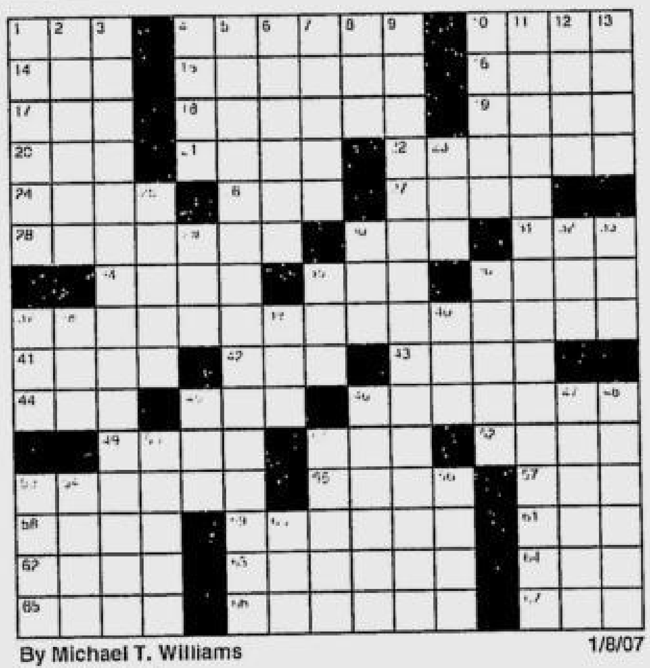

N
WHEN YOU ARE BESIDE ME!

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


fou
TAP TIP TIP TAP
fountain of youth
search
TAP TIP TIP TAP TAP TIP
Search results:0
OH WELL... IT WAS WORTH A SHOT...

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Michael T. Williams
Clearwater, FL

1/8/07

ACROSS

1 45% of M
4 Washbowl
10 Toe the line
14 Poetic meadow
15 North or Stone
16 Bannister's distance
17 Trial-of-the-century inits.
18 Pretentious
19 Seed cover
20 Part of USNA
21 Ed or Leon
22 Common
24 Tied
26 Tic-tac-toe win
27 Ex-Spice Girl Halliwell
28 Sea cows
30 RPM part
31 "Car Talk" broadcaster
34 Half the alphabet?
35 Sawbones
36 Pointed arch
37 Biggest Bowl
41 First name of 32D
42 Crow's call
43 Bye-bye!
44 Greek cross
45 __-CIO
46 Try
49 Garr of "Tootsie"
51 Partner of to
52 Christiania, today
53 Reprimand
55 Wood and Silver
57 Egt.-Syr., once
58 Fiddler or hermit
59 Mate
61 Beat it!
62 17th-century opener
63 Thin paper
64 Top pilot
65 Small lapdog
66 Be present at
67 Notes of scales

DOWN

1 Created a genetic duplicate of
2 Remembrance of things present?
3 Two Bowls
4 "Damn Yankees" vixen
5 Three Bowls
6 MTV play
7 Warning in Juarez
8 Flower garden
9 Three Bowls
10 Astrologer Sydney
11 Two Bowls
12 Lamb's pen name
13 Cry for attention
23 Opposite of 'neath
25 V-shaped cut
29 Japanese drama
30 Hawaiian dish
32 Louvre Pyramid designer
33 Agt.
35 Municipal grp.
36 Start of a path?
37 Bridle part
38 Govt. financial grp.
39 Bad, in Limousin
40 __ "King" Cole
45 Noah's boat
46 Stimulate
47 Flounder
48 Rich cakes
50 Pianist Blake
51 Robert or David
53 B.C. cops
54 "Das Lied von der __"
56 Kernel
60 Abyss

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

S	T	A	T	■	F	E	W	■	C	A	N	A	P	E
H	O	R	O	L	O	G	E	■	A	L	O	M	A	R
A	R	M	O	I	R	E	S	■	R	A	M	O	N	A
M	E	A	T	I	E	S	T	■	T	I	A	R	A	S
A	R	N	O	■	S	T	E	L	E	■	T	E	T	■
N	O	D	O	S	E	■	R	O	S	E	T	T	E	S
■	■	■	■	K	E	A	N	U	■	W	E	T	L	Y
U	L	L	M	A	N	N	■	I	B	E	R	I	A	N
S	E	O	U	L	■	S	P	E	A	R	■	■	■	■
F	V	I	L	D	O	E	R	■	P	S	Y	C	H	O
■	E	T	C	■	B	L	E	A	T	■	T	H	A	D
A	R	E	T	E	S	■	P	R	I	S	T	I	N	E
B	A	R	I	T	E	■	A	L	S	O	R	A	N	S
A	G	E	N	T	S	■	R	E	T	S	I	N	A	S
S	E	D	G	E	S	■	E	S	S	■	A	G	H	A

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1/8/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're intense about whatever you do. It's curious, but inevitably what you do often influences others. Sometimes you're an overnight success. You always do your homework before any important event. This helps to give you a feeling of confidence. In the year ahead, some activities of the past decade will end in order to create room for something new to enter.
Birthdate of: David Bowie, singer; Stephen Hawking, physicist; Boris Vallejo, artist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have the energy to get a lot of work done today. Make the most of this! You can study or explore what you might normally consider to be difficult subjects. (It's a good day to make travel plans as well.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Now is the time to tackle a lot of those red-tape details you've been putting off. Pay some bills. Take care of loose ends connected with insurance matters, debt, taxes and similar items.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You can work very well in partnership with others today. People will be grateful that you're doing more than your fair share. You just want results.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is an excellent day at work. It's a good time to do work where you have to keep plugging away, because today you have lots of patience and motivation to finish your task.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You won't mind increased responsibilities with children today. You are very patient, especially when it comes to teaching someone something.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is an excellent day to clean where you live or help family members in tough tasks. Nothing will daunt you today. You just want to get the job done.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Choose work that requires concentration and attention to detail. Even if it's boring work, you'll do it today. (You might as well make the most of this opportunity.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a good day to size up your assets and figure out what you own and what you owe. You're very serious about your financial situation.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Whatever you do today, you will ask yourself, "How useful is this?" You're concerned with practical results, and you're not afraid to do difficult, exacting work.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is an excellent day to do boring research. You will work at a controlled, regular pace. No matter how difficult your task, you will persevere in it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Join forces with others today to accomplish what you need to do. Others will be amazed at your perseverance and dogged energy.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your ambition is strong today! You're willing to do the homework necessary to attain the results you want in the future.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	6			5			9	
3	4						8	5
			8	2	4			
		4		1		5		
9		5	3	4	2	1		6
		6		8		3		
			2	7	9			
2	9						5	4
	7			3			1	

Difficulty Level ★

1/08

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	4	5	6	3	2	1	8	7
3	8	6	7	1	4	5	2	9
2	7	1	9	5	8	3	6	4
6	3	8	2	7	1	4	9	5
4	1	9	8	6	5	7	3	2
5	2	7	4	9	3	6	1	8
1	9	4	5	8	6	2	7	3
8	6	2	3	4	7	9	5	1
7	5	3	1	2	9	8	4	6

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

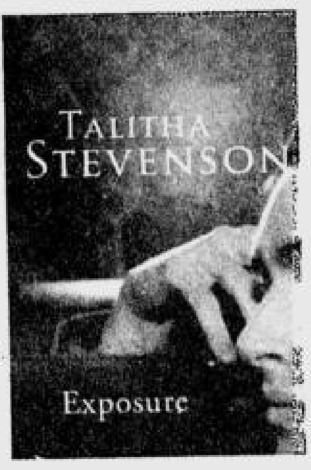
Recommended reads for the New Year

MARIAN KEYES' "CRACKS IN MY Foundation" is the winning follow-up to her smash essay collection, "Under the Duvet." Written in the witty, forthright style that has earned her legions of readers, this work explores such universal themes as friends, family, glamour, beauty, and more.

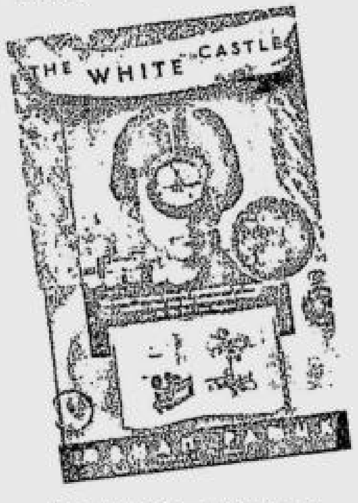
ESSAYS AND STORIES BY
marian keyes

"Ruthless" by Jerry Heller is a fascinating personal tour through the sordid underworld of the music business, guns and grudges, drugs and bodyguards included.

Moazzam Begg's detention, "Enemy Combatant," reveals the author's horrendous experience from being abducted from his home in Afghanistan, to being flown to Guantánamo, where he was held in shackles and subjected to relentless interrogations and abusive and degrading conditions.

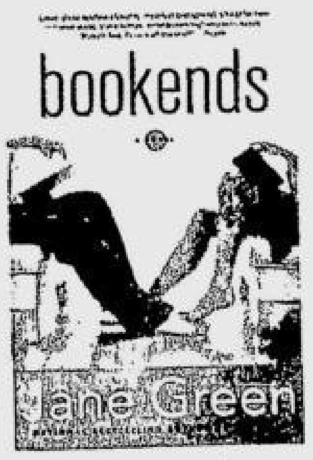


Talitha Stevenson's second novel, "Exposure," explores the dangerous pleasure of offering charity, the effects of deceit and shame on a rigidly complacent family, and the nature of love among family and friends.



"The White Castle" by Nobel-winning Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk recounts the life of a young Italian Christian taken captive at sea by the Ottoman Turks in the 17th century.

In "A Place Called Here," Cecelia Ahern's protagonist Sandy Shortt is obsessed with finding missing things and missing people.



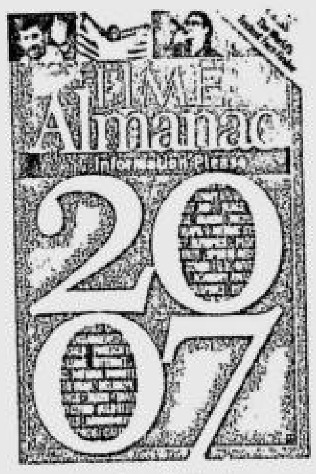
In Jane Green's "Bookends," four friends in their 30s are forced to cope with changes. Cath leaves a stable job to open a bookstore with her friend Lucy; Lucy's husband, Josh, seems to getting back with an old college flame; while Simon finds that his new beau is not winning favor among his dearest friends.

"Shalimar the Clown" by Salman Rushdie is a gripping tale of love and revenge, and the ancient and modern conflicts from which they spring. The story of Max Ophuls, his killer and his daughter, presents an epic narrative that moves from California to Kashmir, from Nazi-occupied Europe to the world of modern terrorism.

In Christine Feehan's "Conspiracy Games," Jack Norton, a genetically enhanced telepathic sniper, is on a mission to rescue his brother in the jungles of the Congo. He meets Briony, a beautiful rebel on a mission of her own.

From global trends to national events, outer space to cyberspace, the past to the present, "Time Almanac 2007" by John Wright contains all the comprehensive up-to-the-minute facts, statistics, dates and pertinent information you'll ever need or want.

Robin Hardy's novelization of the notoriously censored 1973 film, "The Wicker Man," is a compulsive study of faith and temptation. It follows Sergeant Howie's investigation of a child's disappearance in the remote islands off the north coast of Scotland. On Summerisle, he finds a society that favors a heathen religion devoted to the rites of fertility and the pleasures of the flesh.



The books are available at Power Books Specialty Store, which has branches at Greenbelt 4 (7576428 to 29), Megamall (6352898 to 99), Alabang Town Center (8505662 to 63), Glorietta (7527075), Shangri-La (6380023/25), Robinsons Place Ermita (5233334/ 5243448), and Mall of Asia (5560244).

Best books for kids

By Neni Sta. Romana Cruz
Contributor

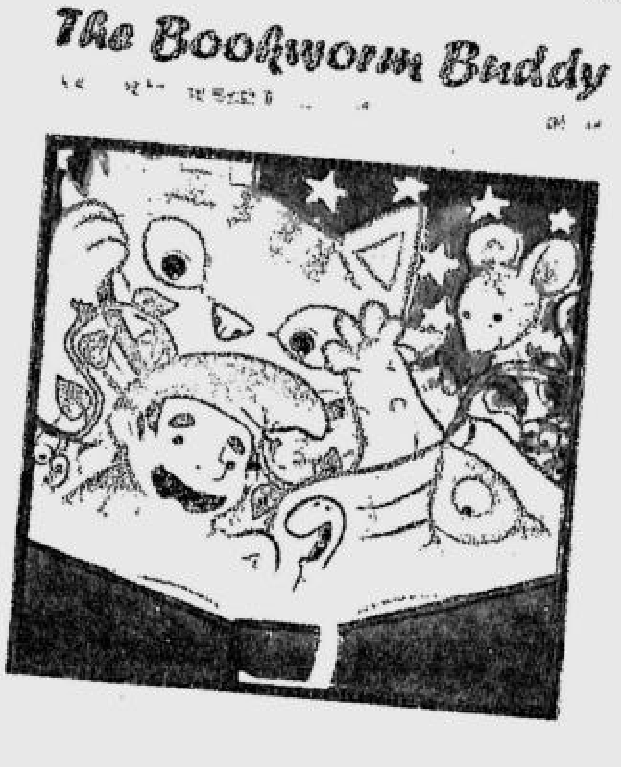
"THE BOOKWORM BUDDY: A Guide to the Best Philippine Children's Literature," by Rica Bolipata Santos and Amy Vijaynagar (illustrations by Robert Magnuson; published by Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation Inc., 2006), is a wonderful idea that had taken so long to materialize, considering that parents, teachers, librarians, and all other grownups working on literacy campaigns have shown a keen interest in recommended book lists and ways to make literature more meaningful for children.

The title carries a bit of a misnomer though, because this is actually a choice selection of the most popular 50 books from the SAS Reading Collection especially targeted for Grade 4 children.

While the pool of books does not represent the entire body of Philippine children's literature, it is nevertheless a noteworthy collection that has been carefully selected by a panel of reading experts, teachers and children on three criteria: literary merit, readability and expression of Filipino family values.

User-friendly

A true buddy, this is a most helpful, user-friendly and handy guide for anyone working with children's books. One can no longer just read a story without heeding its Tips for Grownups and its Expanding Horizons ideas, which literally take the reader beyond the book and are easy to implement. Whenever field trips are recommended, the contact details are thoughtfully provided. And even if one does not follow these tips, they provide at the very least a springboard for other related activities.



Especially helpful is the capsule summary beside the book cover that appears on every page and the note that indicates whether the book is written only in one language, as the majority of titles are in both languages. Followers of Philippine children's literature will relish being reintroduced to perennial favorites.

The books have been grouped into four sections: I Wonder for stories with animal characters; I Imagine has stories from folk literature; I Love has stories on family and friends and relationships; I Care introduces the children to stories of special people, special places and special issues, from the environment to physical and mental disabilities.

A few examples:

"Ang Mahiyaing Manok"/"The Shy Rooster," written by Rebecca T. Añonuevo and illustrated by Ruben de Jesus, provides a discussion on personal feelings and fears. The specific activity recommended is that children be allowed to practice and overcome their fear of public speaking.

"Ang Pambihirang Sombrero" ("The Amazing Hat"), written and illustrated by Jose Miguel Tejido, is a popular choice especially for storytelling. The story is an effective way to introduce community helpers and is a take-off for all the questions one can ask grownups in the neighborhood.

"The Monkey and the Turtle" page, retold and illustrated by Jose P. Rizal, recommends an interesting writing exercise—an imaginary dialogue between two favorite animals.

A role-playing guessing activity using only facial expressions and body language is suggested for the story on estranged parents, "Papa's House, Mama's House," by Jean Lee C. Patindol and illustrated by Mark Ramsel N. Salvatus III.

No moral lessons

Thankfully, the authors had the foresight to include the addresses of the publishers of the storybooks cited, the bookstores where these titles may most likely be found, a short informative essay on how parents can make reading a part of their family routine, and even a few blank pages for the user's personal notes.

As it promises, "The Bookworm Buddy" truly celebrates children's books. It should pave the way for more detailed and more comprehensive guides in the future. What is noticeably lacking is an emphasis on sheer literary appreciation, a close attention to the unique use of words and language. Page numbers and a table of contents would have been welcome features.

But it is enough of a blessing that no moral lesson was asked for! And a special good fortune that such a book is now available.

For more information about "The Bookworm Buddy" or Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation, call 8863888 locals 3523, 3525.

The author is a member of the Philippine Board on Books for Young People. E-mail nenisrc@gmail.com.

Best-selling trilogy is written by teenager

"ERAGON" AUTHOR CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI was born in 1983 and grew up in Paradise Valley, Montana, with his parents and younger sister. Home-schooled for most of his life, Christopher attended high school through an accredited correspondence course. At the age of 15, he started writing "Eragon" and the rest of the "Inheritance Trilogy."

The story revolves around a 15-year-old farm boy, Eragon, who stumbles upon a dragon hatchling, the first born in over a century and who must take on the mantle of the legendary Dragon Riders. A fast-paced, suspense-filled adventure following the tradition of great fantasists like J.R.R. Tolkien and Ursula Le Guin, all of the characters in this precocious debut came from Christopher's imagination except for Angela the herbalist, who is loosely based on his younger sister. In 2002, Eragon was self-published by the Paolini family. Christopher himself went to over 135 schools and libraries giving talks while dressed in medieval attire.

All of the family's efforts paid off when Carl Hiaasen, an American journalist, came across Eragon through his stepson. Hiaasen enjoyed reading the book and recommended it to his publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, who acquired the rights to publish Eragon and the rest of the Inheritance Trilogy. In 2005, the second book, "Eldest" was released.

Paolini, despite his young age, was able to impress the world with his talent in writing. "Eragon" became a huge success worldwide and can now be enjoyed on the big screen as 20th Century Fox adapts the epic fantasy into a highly anticipated movie.

"The Inheritance Trilogy" books are available at Power Books Specialty Store.

CHRISTOPHER Paolini, "Eragon" author

Cellist makes his mark; 'After Aida' opens

From page D1

ing with a living composer should never be belittled."

What would he say is the key to a good performance?

"First, keep your audience involved. There is a danger to detach oneself from the audience. But then you must realize that performing is not complete without an audience listening and communicating with the artist."

RACHELLE Gerodias

'After Aida' at Teatrino

The musical play to watch during the weekend is Julian Mitchell's "After Aida," due at the Teatrino in Greenhills on Jan. 13, 8 p.m. The play revolves around the life of composer Giuseppi Verdi and how the opera "Otello" came to be. Paul Holme plays the Italian composer, Bart Guingona the librettist Arrigo Boito, Enchang Kaimo Verdi's wife, Jaime del Mundo Giulio Ricordi and Robbie Guevara Franco Faccio.

Singers Rachelle Gerodias, Nenen Espina, Ronan Ferrer, Randy Gilongo and Noel Azcona will sing Verdi arias to be accompanied by Mary Anne Espina. Jaime del Mundo directs.

For tickets, call 9007023 or cell 0906-5104270.

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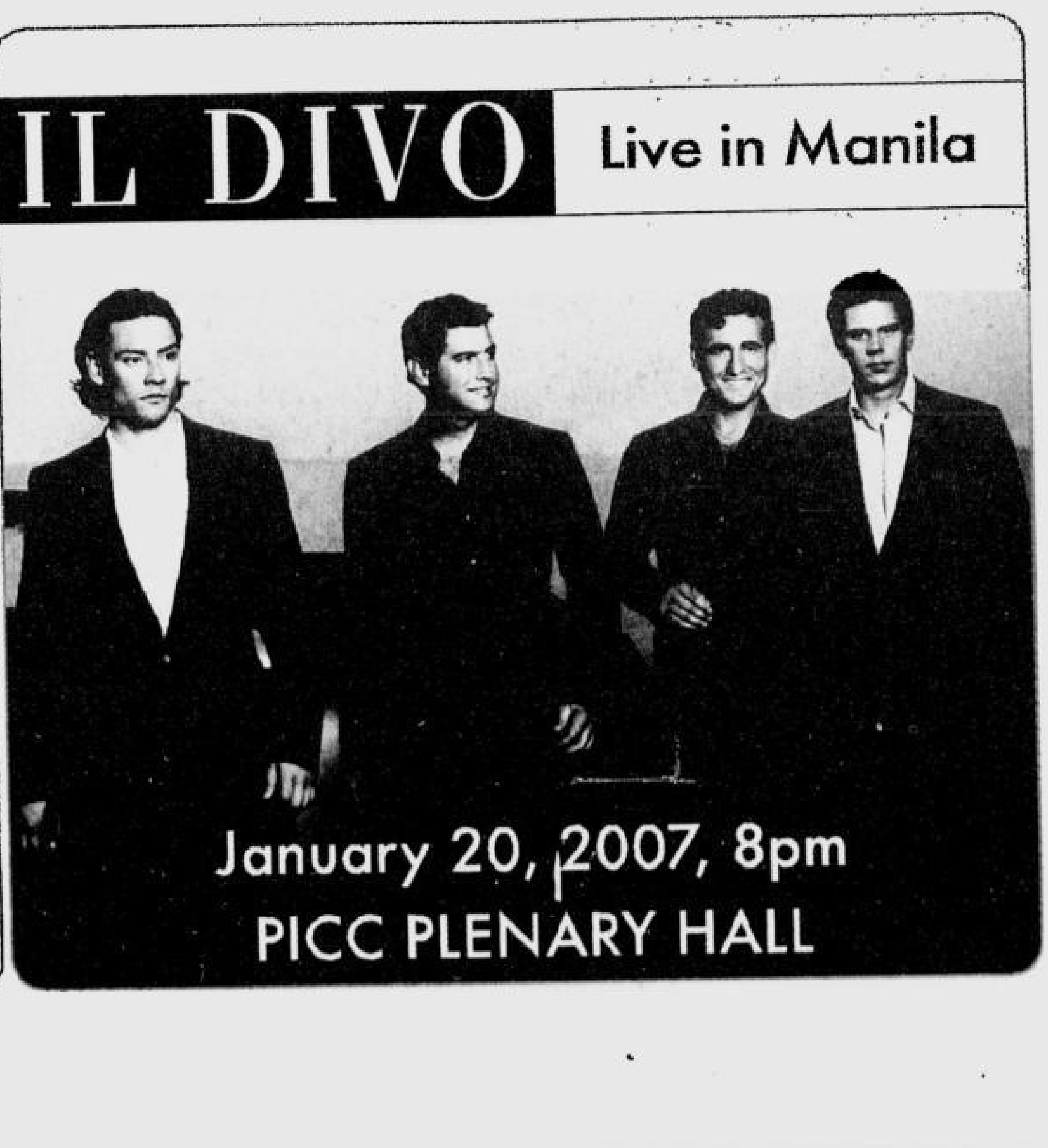
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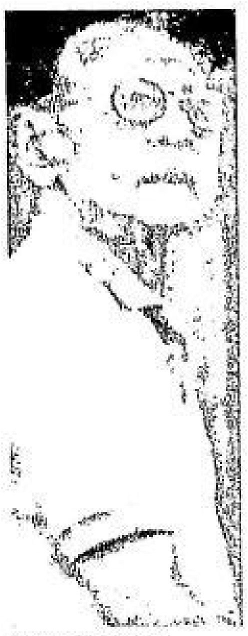
PICC PLENARY HALL

Rediscovering Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero, playwright

Gantimpala Theater mounts a twinbill production of the pioneering Pinoy dramatist's one-act plays, 'Forever' and 'Call Me Flory'

By Tony S. Espejo
Contributor



WILFRIDO Ma. Guerrero

WILFRIDO MA. GUERrero's over a hundred plays were never considered part of the Gantimpala Theater season. He writes in English and GTF is an avowed producer of plays in Filipino, or at least translations. In addition, the bulk of our productions are directly curriculum-oriented—titles that are discussed in the classrooms. Add to that, we initially produced playwriting winners that won in the annual CCP Literary Contest, and most of these plays were written in Filipino.

But then, the English teachers and department heads complained! They were being left out in the all-important exposure of their English students to productions in English! Why should the Filipino department get all the field trips and the exposure to play-watching?

That's why we pulled together the dramatization of "The Necklace" doubled with "New Yorker in Tondo," both in English, and the students and teachers loved it. And so was born the formula of an English twin-bill production, one serious and one riotous!

WILMA Doesnt, Kimberly Diaz and Monica Llamas in "Call Me Flory"

We continuously search for English plays by Filipino writers. In the process, we've found out that the majority of these writers were National Artists, so we're exploring the idea of concentrating on the works of National Artists. This way, we get to know the output that made them deserving of the National Artist title in the first place, and in turn offer our student audience the chance to emulate their lives and, more importantly, their works.

Another factor that made us stage English plays by Filipino writers is the generic aim called "globalization" and the requirements for hiring English literate Filipinos by "call centers." Now, who would ever think that the call center phenomenon would compel us to rush to Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero plays, read them and study them seriously?

Highly recommended

The play "Forever" came highly recommended. The lead female character Maria Teresa—strong-willed and unwilling to compromise—is a women's libber's delight! Although the language is a bit archaic and the scenes melodramatic, Guerrero wrote with an allowance of interpretation, and that is a significant factor.

It is easy enough to have screaming bouts, torrents of tears to flood the scene and a slapping scene here and there, but on the other hand it can also work as a "quiet, little play" that tears at your guts—the pain of wanting to forget, but somehow the knife grates at your loins and keeps reminding you of the pain that was unbearable 10 years ago.

You have suffered long. Why lose the dignity and poise you've had to bear for 10 years in the few minutes that this man offers reconciliation?

Roeder Camañag (Ernesto) and Monica Llamas (Maria Teresa) play the yin and yang protagonists with restraint. They reach their emotional peak in a monologue-cum-duet where they vent their anguish and frustration at each other.

Kimberly Diaz (Consuelo) is the tensed sister-in-law while Abner Delina Jr. (alternating with Michael King Urieta as Ernesting) and Vincent Reyes Kuipers (Billy Parjan alternating as Oscar) mark their presence with crisp dialogue.

"Call Me Flory" was a more difficult choice. At first reading, it felt unfinished and too skeletal, but it had promises of a very funny play. We decided to add a few more characters and introduce a few new scenes. In this play, we meet political and social climbers raising funds for the poor, but all in the name of the First Lady of the land. This '70s-set play reveals blackmailing by otherwise decent folks. In their individual desire to get in the good graces of the powers-that-be, they are willing and ready to step on anybody's toes.

Because the characters involved are obsessed with their looks and their social standing, we thought of adding a fashion designer. And if a designer is around, can the boys be far behind? Within the riotous scenes, Wilma Doesnt attacks her role with her special kind of comedy (Lailanie Ann Tejuco alternates as Flory). The newest GTF hunks playing the "Boy Toys" are Jude Sypongco and Troy de Guzman.

We've added ballroom dancing and an ending that we are all too familiar with in local TV sitcoms—the *habulan* and the hair pulling and the screaming of traitors and falling all over the set!

Giving their special artistic touches are J. Dennis Teodosio for additional dialogue and characters; Joey Nombres for light design; Roobak Valle for set design; and Albert Figueras for costume design.

I sincerely hope that Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero does not turn in his grace with this staging. After all, we have discovered him once again, and his works are proving to be made of the quality of great literature—timeless—globalization and "call center" not withstanding!

"Forever"/"Call Me Flory" performances start with outreach tours Jan. 12 (La Union), Jan. 19 (Urdaneta) and Jan. 23 (Cabanatuan). Manila shows are slated Jan. 26-28 (10 a.m./2 p.m.); and Feb. 3-4 (10 a.m./2 p.m.) at the AFP Camp Aguinaldo Theater in Quezon City.

For tickets and booking information, call 8995745/8963503; for outreach tours/sponsorships, call 5280603/5365860.

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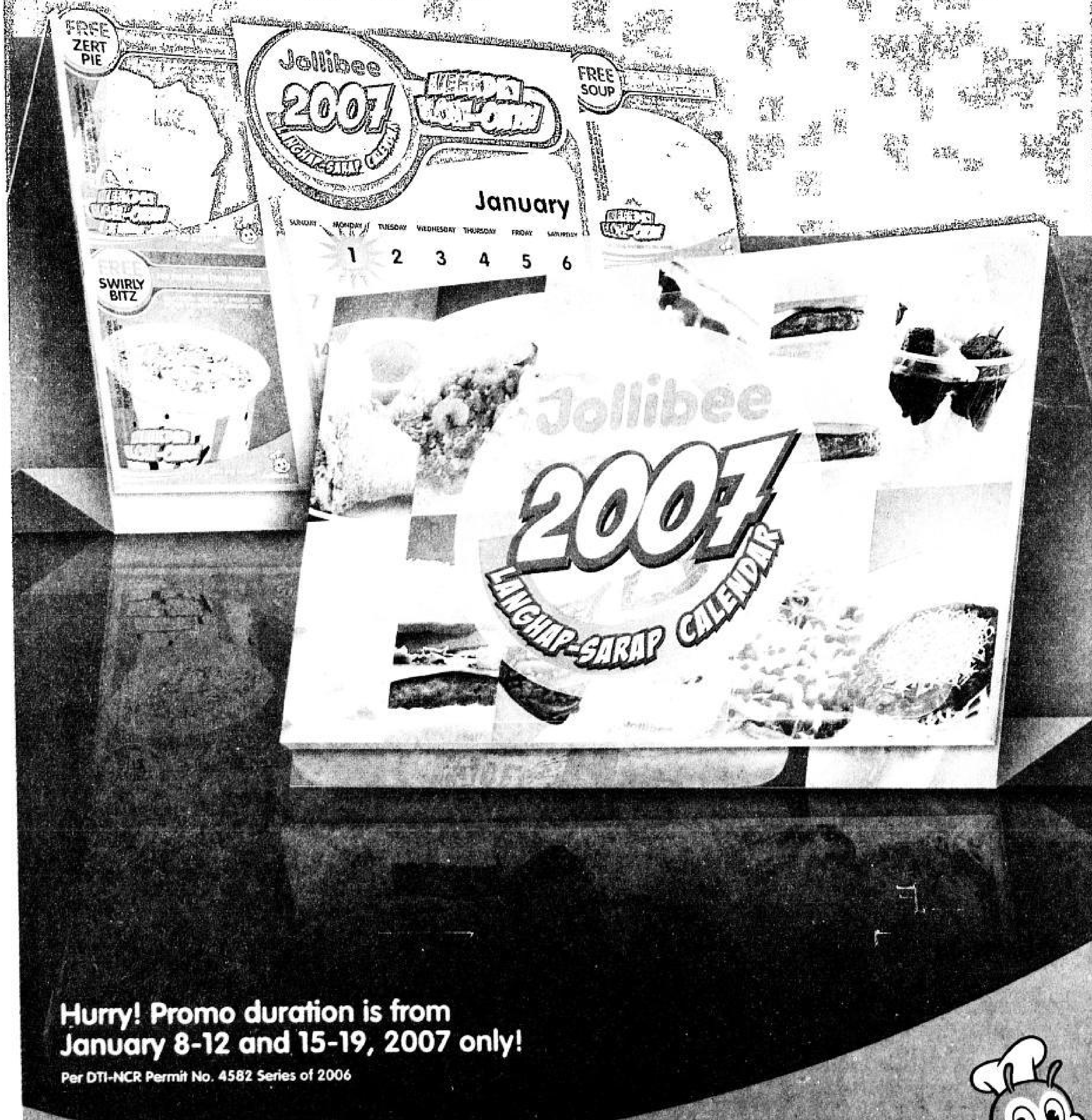

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Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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BAYANI Fernando and his wife, Mayor Marides Fernando of Marikina, award cash prize to "Enteng" producer Orly Ilacad for 2005 film fest last March. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

'Hollywood will benefit'

Bayani Fernando says cooperation, not abolition, is the answer to MMFF problems

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

"EVERY YEAR THERE ARE CONtroversies and, every year, there's a move to abolish the MMFF," observes Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), which spearheads the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

"If these protesters really want to abolish the film fest, they should go to Congress so they can change the law. But I don't think they understand the repercussions of their proposal," Fernando tells INQUIRER Entertainment in a phone interview.

He asserts that local government units (LGUs) stand to benefit the most if the MMFF is abolished. "LGUs will only be too happy to get back the amusement taxes that are supposed to go to the industry."

He also points out that Hollywood studios will also welcome the idea of getting back the film fest's Dec. 25 to Jan. 7 play dates—traditionally a very lucrative two-week period in terms of gross sales.

"If the MMFF is abolished, Filipinos will get to watch nothing but Disney movies during the holidays," he insists. "I don't know if these protesters are really speaking on behalf of the movie industry."

'Very emotional'

He also comments on the letter sent to him by Malou N. Santos, Star Cinema executive producer, protesting the loss of her company's entry, "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," in the Best Picture race.

"It was a very emotional letter," he says. "I can't do anything about that. I know how painful it is to lose."

He insists, however, that the ensuing controversy has helped the box-office performance of all MMFF entries, including "Kasal." "Do you notice that every time Ms. Santos gets interviewed [on TV], the box-office performance of 'Kasal' improves? Show biz thrives on intrigues."

As of Jan. 4, "Enteng Kabisote" still led with P112,456,584. "Kasal" was a close second with P107,496,737. "Shake, Rattle & Roll 8" was a distant third with P48,657,732.

Fernando predicts that the MMFF, now on its 32nd edition, will have earned over P400 million by the end of its run (yesterday). "Although it's still P100 million short of our target of P500 million, it's higher compared to last year's earnings of P352 million."

Challenge

Santos' letter ended with a challenge to the MMFF executive committee: "Explain the deliberation and decision-making [process]... [and] rectify whatever dubious decision... and institute reforms..."

"We do not need to review this year's results. But, [these protesters] are free to give their suggestions for next year's festival," Fernando explains.

He reiterates that the MMFF sponsors a "forum for industry stakeholders every year—in which we discuss possible improvements in the rules and processes governing the festival... Unfortunately, I don't see the protesters at these meetings."

He says that the MMFF will hold the annual industry forum in February. "I have no ill feelings toward them. What's important is for industry stakeholders, including the protesters, to attend this year's meeting so that we can fine-tune the rules."

VIC SOTTO as Enteng still ahead in box-office race

DID YOU KNOW...

LOS ANGELES—The Screen Actors Guild has announced nominations for this year's awards.

The SAG awards, to be given Jan. 28, are a key indicator ahead of next month's Academy Awards (Oscars).

Since the SAG awards were first presented in 1995, 31 recipients of the Actor have gone on to win Oscars, compared with 28 Golden Globe winners in the same span.

But last year, the Golden Globes predicted all four of the Oscars' acting winners; the SAG Awards, three. The Oscars will be handed out Feb. 25. *AFP*

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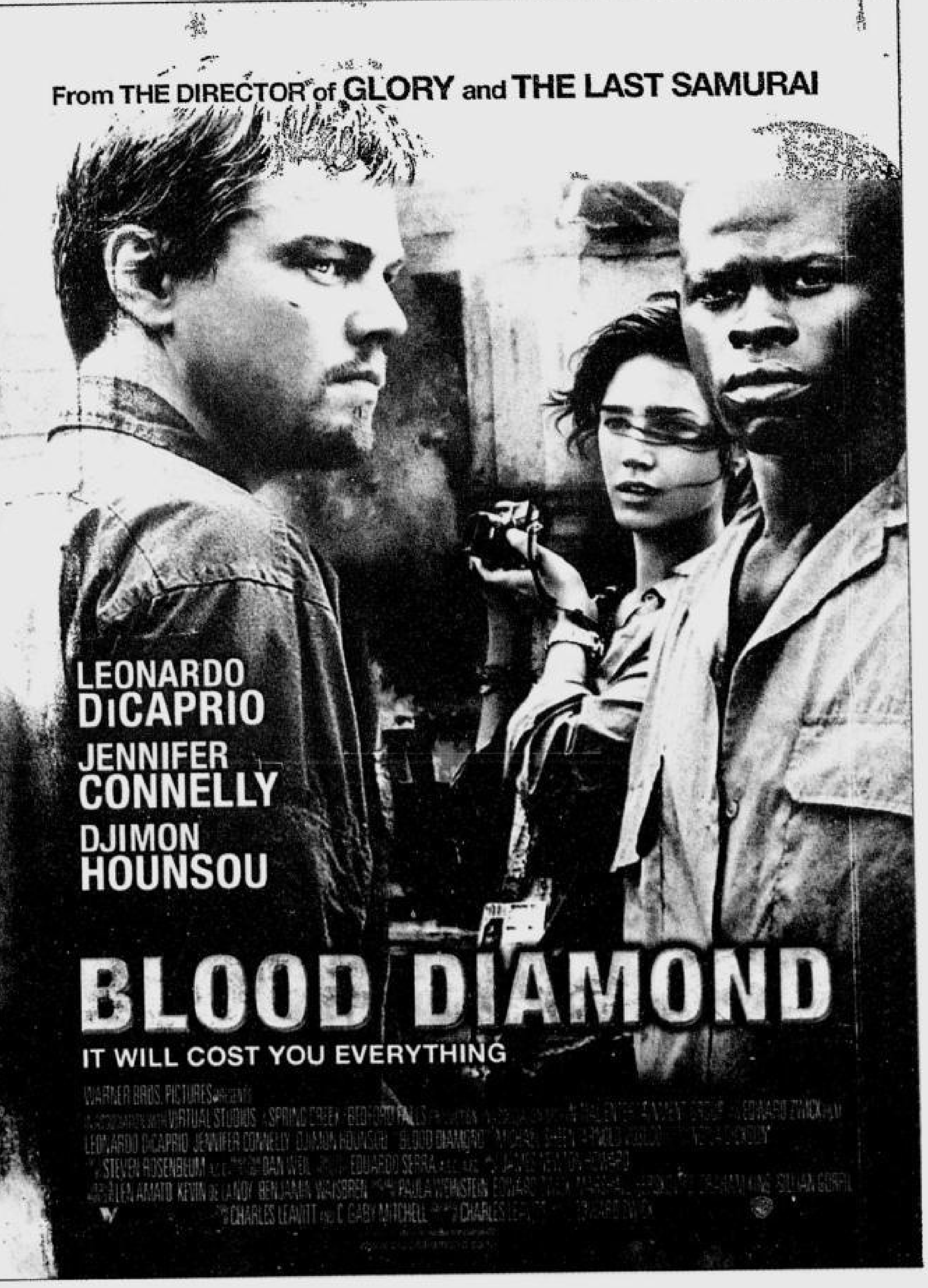
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From hit movies to 'cinenovelas'

By Nini Valera

GMA 7 HAS ACQUIRED THE RIGHTS to serialize for television five blockbuster movies from Viva Films.

The movies—"Saan Darating Ang Umaga?" "Dapat Ka Bang Mahalin," "Sinasamba Kita," "Kung Mahawi Man Ang Ulap," and "Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan?"—will each be blown up into a series under the "cinenovela" genre, according to Wilma Galvante, GMA 7 senior vice president for entertainment.

16 weeks max

Each series will run for a maximum of 16 weeks, she added.

"We started remaking classics with 'Darna,' and its success as a series has encouraged us to look at the classics," Galvante said.

"Darna" has had several remakes as a movie. After "Darna," GMA 7 produced as a series "Captain Barbell," another Mars Ravelo classic.

Galvante noted that GMA 7's productions of such classic movies had given the *komiks* stories longer shelf life.

They were even better produced than the original, she claimed. And, unlike a movie, with a running time of only 90 minutes, a TV series runs daily, accounting for the "stickiness" of the material with the audience.

Modern dimension

"In a series, we can stretch the story to include more sub-plots, more characters, more twists and turns," Galvante explained. "But we always give it a modern dimension to be in tune with the times."

In remaking the Viva movies, Galvante is also banking on the films' equity with the audience.

"Sinasamba Kita" and "Gaano Kadalas ang Minsan?" both starred Vilma Santos, and were monstrous hits in the 1980s.

"Dapat Ka Bang Mahalin" reunited Sharon Cuneta and Gabby Concepcion and echoed their real-life early marriage and its eventual collapse.

"Kung Mahawi Man Ang Ulap" showcased Hilda Koronel going through all the travails of a young woman, who had to deal with a scheming stepfather (Eddie Garcia) out to dupe her of her inheritance.

"Saan Darating Ang Umaga?," which starred Maricel Soriano, is a family drama that revolved around conflicts created by a child in the family.

Keep 'em riveted

Galvante said the TV remakes will remain true to the stories' plots.

"In all our remakes, we have never violated the basic plot of the author," Galvante said. "Even if we add more characters, we still remain faithful to the story. That's why we have maintained a good working relationship with the authors."

She said characters are added to expand the story and give it a bigger dimension "that the audience appreciates."

"It's giving them something new," Galvante said. "Otherwise, *sawa* (fatigue) factor sets in. So we have to keep the viewers riveted with the story. It's up to our writers to embellish the story."

This early, GMA 7 has shown that it has mastered the "cinenovela" genre.

"Bakekang," a classic *komiks* novel by Carlo J. Caparas, which was made into a movie starring Nora Aunor in the 1980s, is one of the network's highest-rating prime time series.

Galvante is "Bakekang's" number one fan. "I'm hooked on it," she admitted. "It has all the classic ingredients of a soap."

'Barbell's' last leg

"Captain Barbell," starring Richard Gutierrez, is another example of the success factor of the genre. Now in its last leg, the series is still soaring high in the ratings. It will end on Jan. 15, and will be replaced by the Robin Padilla-Angel Locsin action-adventure series, "Asian Treasures."

Galvante said the "cinenovelas" will cast GMA 7's young stars in lead roles, but the lineups have yet to be finalized.

"We still have not reached the casting stage," she said. "But definitely, we will be tapping our young stars."

She noted, however, that veteran actors offer strong support to the young ones.

"It's still a mixture of the old and the new," Galvante said. "We don't use half-baked talents to carry a series. It will never stand."

Aside from the Viva movies, GMA 7 has also bought the rights to "Fantastic Man" from Canary Films and Vic Sotto, who starred in the movie shown during the 2004 Metro Manila Film Festival.

ROUNDUP

Public service show

Medical concerns are addressed on a new weekly television show titled "Makabayang Duktor" hosted by Drs. Willie and Liza Ong.

The public service program, which premiered Jan. 6 on NBN 4, features a roving medical vehicle that roams around depressed areas to look after the health needs of the poor.

It airs Saturdays, 10:30 a.m.

'All Star K!' anniversary

"All Star K!'s" month-long anniversary celebration continues as the Sexbomb Girls vie for the P1 million jackpot in the Jan. 14 episode.

On Jan. 21, there will be a Battle of the Champions featuring Brennan Espartinez, Allysa Alano, Jennylyn Mercado, Mylene Dizon, Jet Pangan, 'Aia of Imago and Isabel Oli. K!llers will be Gladys Guevara and Teri Onor.

The show airs Sunday night after "Mel & Joey" on GMA-7.

Korean series

GMA 7 airs "Jumong," Korea's 2006 No. 1 TV series, replacing "A Rosy Life" on its prime time block.

This period drama is based on the life of a real Korean hero, Jumong (Song Il Gook).

"JUMONG"

The series premieres tonight after "Bakekang."

De Niro, Soderbergh movies

BERLIN—New movies from Robert De Niro and Steven Soderbergh are among the first chosen for the competition at this year's Berlin International Film Festival, organizers said Thursday.

The festival, which runs from Feb. 8 to 18, will feature De Niro's second outing as a director—"The Good Shepherd," a tale about the earliest days of the CIA and a fictionalized agent, played by Matt Damon. De Niro directed "A Bronx Tale" in 1993.

Soderbergh's "The Good German" stars George Clooney as an American journalist lured into a murder mystery in post-World War II Berlin.

AP

MARLON BRANDO

Brando lawsuit

LOS ANGELES—A former assistant to Marlon Brando has settled a lawsuit with executors of the late actor's estate over claims she was cheated out of a home bought for her by the Hollywood idol, her lawyer said Wednesday.

Angela Borlaza claimed in a lawsuit filed last year that executors of Brando's estate had changed the actor's will shortly before his death in 2004 and evicted her from a house he had promised to leave to her.

According to papers filed in a related case in Los Angeles on Dec. 22, Borlaza agreed to settle all the claims in exchange for $125,000.

Borlaza worked for Brando for nine years from February 1995 until his death two-and-a-half years ago. *AFP*

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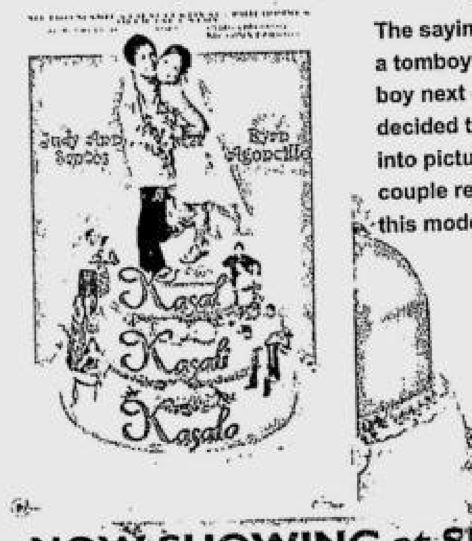

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movietime PROMO
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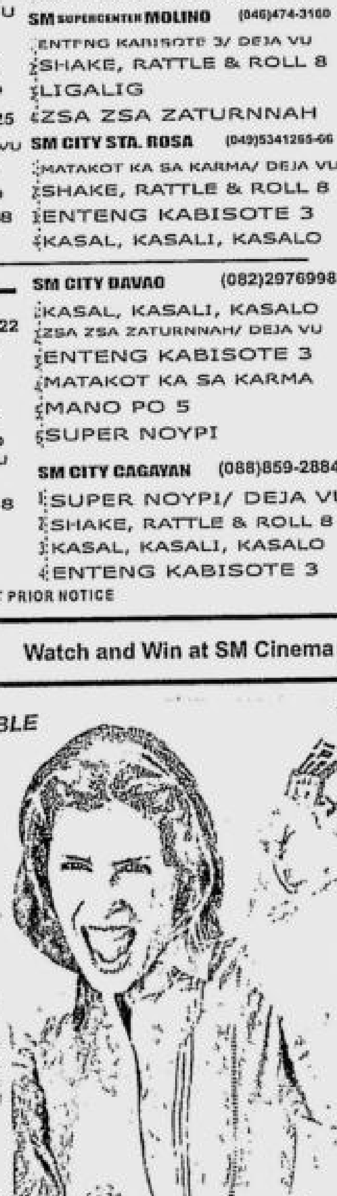

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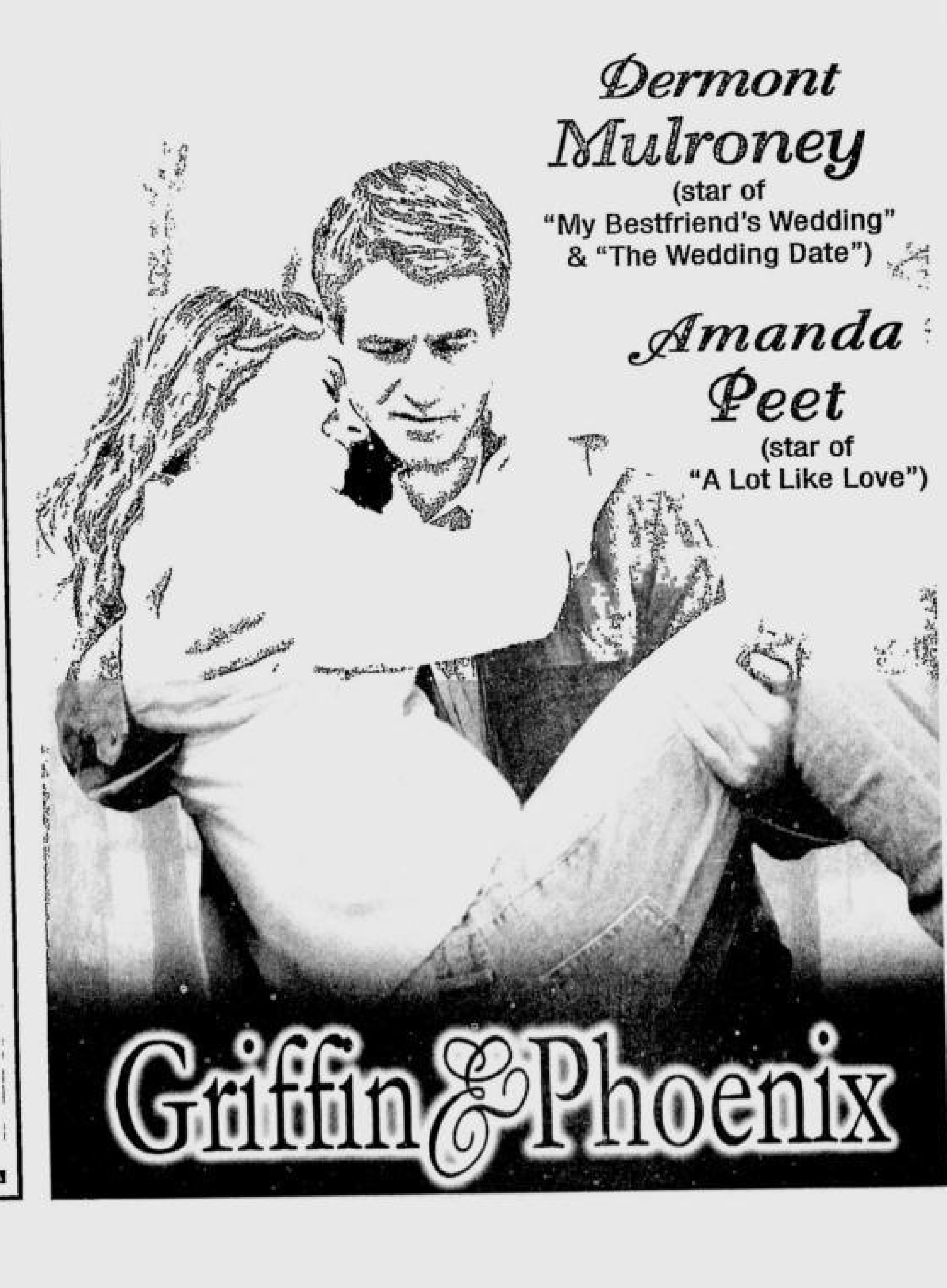
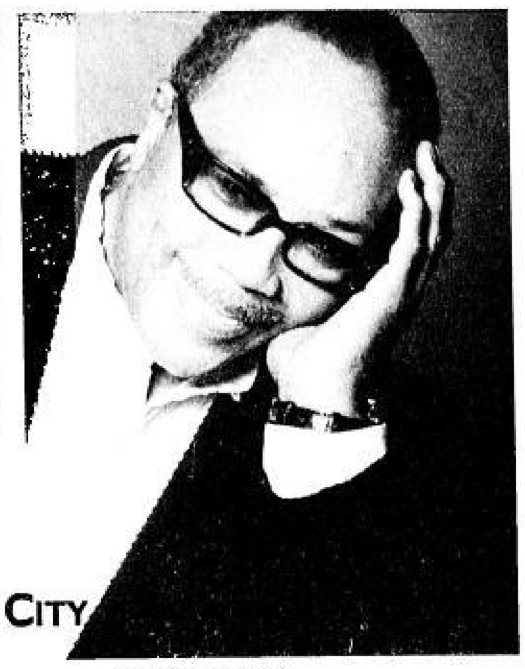


Dermont Mulroney
(star of "My Bestfriend's Wedding" & "The Wedding Date")
Amanda Peet
(star of "A Lot Like Love")
Griffin & Phoenix

IL DIVO



QUINCY JONES

SPIN CITY

Rare Quincy footage in jazz series on DVD

NEW YORK—THE MEMORIES COME FLASHing back when Quincy Jones watches the DVD of himself as a young man directing his "dream" jazz big band that barnstormed through Europe in 1960 after unrest in Paris forced the musical they were performing in to close.

"Quincy Jones—Live in '60" is one of nine DVDs in the recently released "Jazz Icons" series featuring long-lost concert and studio film footage from the 1950s through the 1970s of such influential jazz artists as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and Chet Baker.

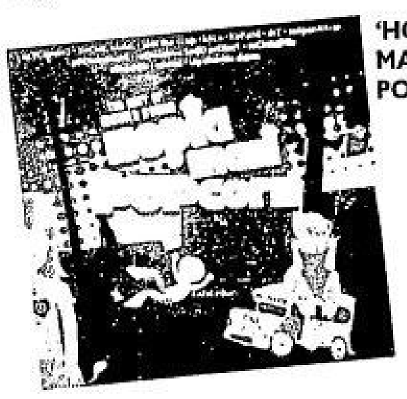
The film was uncovered in European TV vaults and nearly all of the material is being released officially for the first time.

The DVD showcases Jones' tight ensemble arrangements and colorful orchestrations, including piccolo-flute duets on "Lester Leaps In," Julius Watkins' French horn solo on "Everybody's Blues," and flügelhorn and muted trumpet backgrounds on the ballad "The Gypsy" featuring alto saxophonist Phil Woods. *AP*

Il Divo returns

Il Divo, the quartet that brought opera into the mainstream, has released their third album "Siempre," a mixture of classic and new songs.

The album, under Sony BMG Music Entertainment, includes the songs "Nights In White Satin," "Caruso," "Somewhere," "Without You," "You Raise Me Up," "Come Primavera," "Un Regalo Que Te Dio La Vida (Have You Ever Really Loved A Woman), "La Vida Sin Amor" and "Una Noche."



'HOPIA MANI POPCORN'

Manila Sound

"The Best of Manila Sound: Hopia, Mani, Popcorn" under Viva Records features today's bands and artists interpreting classic Manila Sound hits.

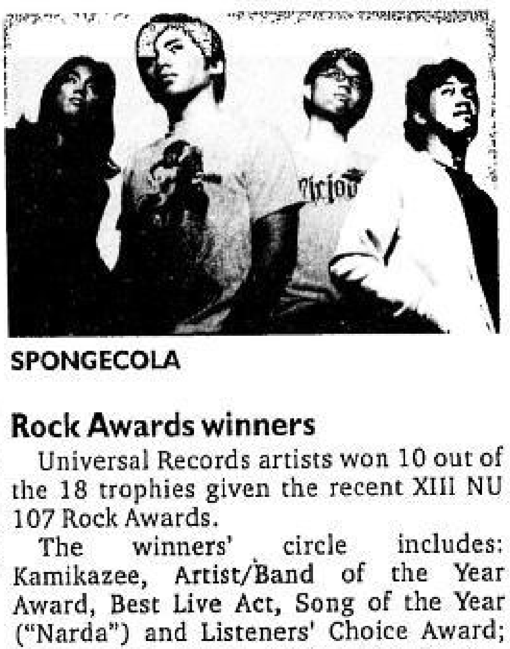
Among the songs in the album are: "No Touch" (Rocksteddy); "Ipagpatawad Mo" (Mayonnaise); "Hanggang Magdamag" (Kapatid); "Kahit Maputi Na Ang Buhok Ko" (Soapdish); "Rock, Baby, Rock" (Kala); "Bitin Sa 'Yo" (Up Dharma Down); "Bonggahan" (6Cyclemind); "Macho Guwapito" (Protein Shake); "Tao" (DRT); "Kapalaran" (Radioactive Sago Project; "Ako Si Superman" (Sound); "Handog" (Join The Club); and "TL Ako Sa 'Yo" (Kitchie Nadal).

Concert video

"KaminAPO Muna The Concert," staged by MYX music channel, has been released on video—DVD and VCD formats—by Universal Records.

The live performance features the rock acts singing APO Hiking Society's tunes—Parokya ni Edgar, Kamikazee, Orange and Lemons, Sponge Cola, Sandwich, Sugarfree, Itchyworms, Imago, Shamrock, Barbie Almalbis, Rocksteddy, Top Suzara, Moonstar88, Drip, Sound and Boldstar.

The "KaminAPO Muna" album is available on a limited two-CD set.



SPONGECOLA

Rock Awards winners

Universal Records artists won 10 out of the 18 trophies given the recent XIII NU 107 Rock Awards.

The winners' circle includes: Kamikazee, Artist/Band of the Year Award, Best Live Act, Song of the Year ("Narda") and Listeners' Choice Award; Itchyworms, Album of the Year ("Noontime Show"), Producer of the Year (Raimund Marasigan, Buddy Zabala for "Noontime Show"), Drummer of the Year (Jazz Nicholas) and the Rising Sun Award. Myrene Academia of Imago/Sandwich, Bassist of the Year.

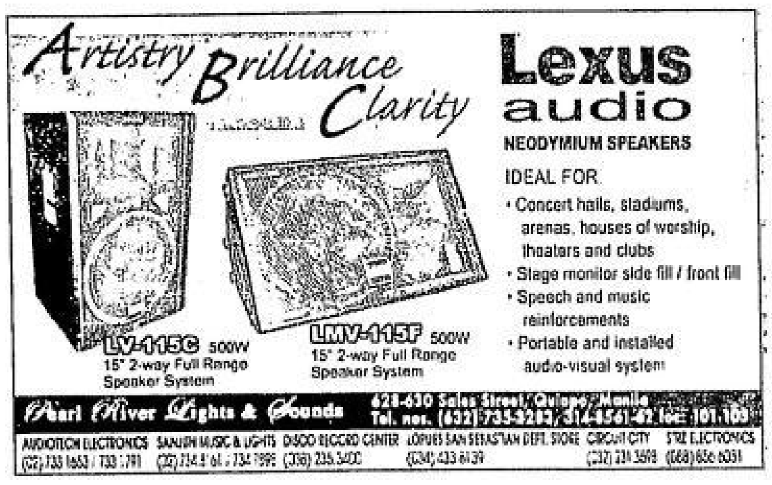
'Crystal Voice'

"Marri Nallos, The Crystal Voice of Asia" has been launched recently, with the carrier single "Mahal Naman Kita" composed by Marizen Yanesa-Soriano.

MARRI NALLOS

The album contains a revival of John Lennon's "Imagine" and a duet with actor-singer Juan Rodrigo of Paul Anka's "You Are My Destiny."

All the songs in the album were arranged by Ferdie Marquez.



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Liberator of oppressed televiewers

POLICE REPORT THAT LARA MORENA, ACtress—how loosely we use the word!—swapped charges with boyfriend Anthony Cruz after they came to blows, bites, bawling and heaven knows what else in the course of a scuffle.

The scuffle allegedly took place last week in the actress's Legaspi Village condominium in Makati.

As we write, on a Saturday, they are being interviewed on nationwide TV, trading accusations, hinting at petty jealousies, pregnancy and past tiffs—like they were alone.

Thank goodness for the clicker, liberator of oppressed viewers! *With a report from Tarra V. Quismundo*

Rufa Mae pregnant?

RUFA MAE QUINTO

We may never know how the talk started. But right this minute, Rufa Mae Quinto is on TV as well, saying in so many words that she's not pregnant, as rumored, by boyfriend Erik Santos. Erik is being interviewed, too, and he says he loves her really and truly.

What about Rufa Mae, the interviewer asks? Of course she cares just as much for Erik, she says, so much so that they're having a concert together soon.

Uh, where did that come from?

Pink silk sari

ELIZABETH HURLEY

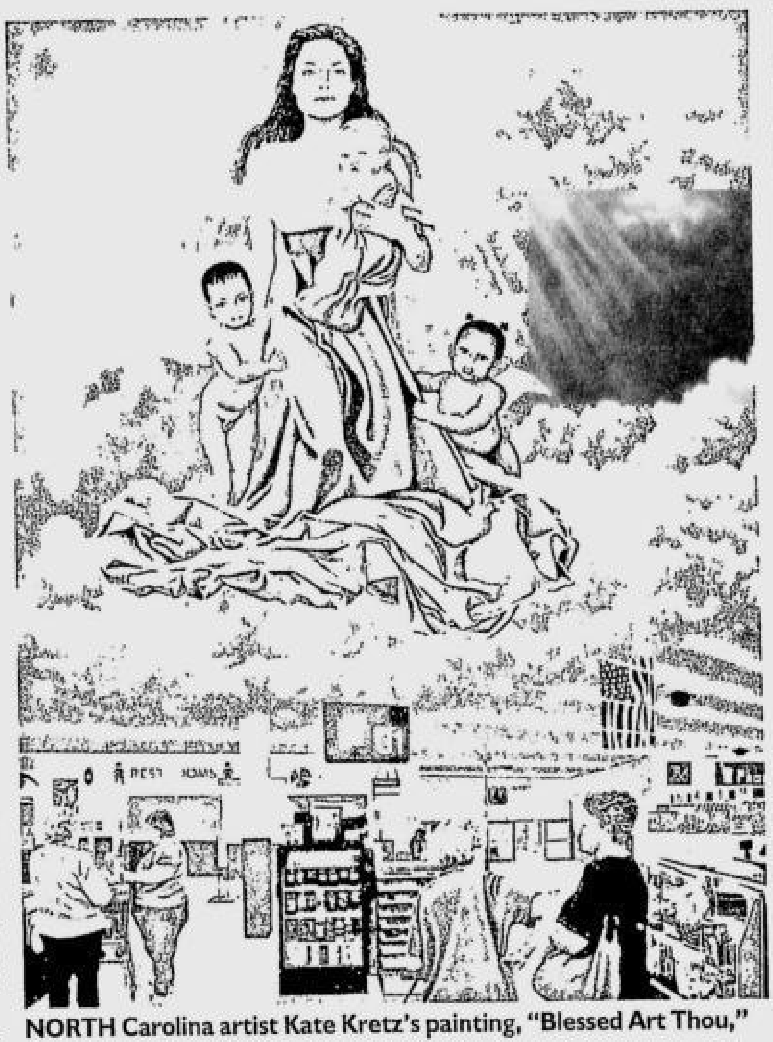
MUMBAI—British model and actress Elizabeth Hurley will wear a £4,000 ($7,800) pink silk sari for her traditional Indian-style wedding to businessman Arun Nayar which is set for early March, a newspaper said on Friday.

Hurley, the former lover of Hollywood actor Hugh Grant, had said in August that she would marry Nayar, a jetsetting Indian businessman, "very soon" and that she was also thinking of having a baby with him.

The 41-year-old "Bedazzled" star could marry at the Barnsley House hotel near her Gloucestershire home, The Times of India newspaper said without revealing the source of its information.

"Nayar and Hurley are said to have their hearts set on the Devigarh palace in Rajasthan for their traditional wedding," the newspaper said referring to the western Indian desert state known for its opulent palaces. *Reuters*

Heavenly Angelina


NORTH Carolina artist Kate Kretz's painting, "Blessed Art Thou," featuring Angelina Jolie and her three children. AP

RALEIGH, North Carolina—A painting of actress Angelina Jolie as the Virgin Mary hovering over a Wal-Mart check-out line is on sale for $50,000 and has created a buzz on the Internet.

Kate Kretz has painted for 20 years but none of her previous works has garnered the attention given "Blessed Art Thou," which was to show at Art Miami 2007 beginning Friday.

The painting—acrylic and oil on linen—depicts an angelic Jolie in the clouds, holding her newborn daughter Shiloh with children Maddox and Zahara at her legs. Below them is a checkout line at Wal-Mart, where women wait in line. The painting is for sale through Chelsea Galleria in Miami, which represents Kretz.

On her blog, Kretz said the painting addresses "the celebrity worship cycle." She said she chose Jolie for the subject "because of her unavoidable presence in the media, the worldwide anticipation of her child, her 'unattainable' beauty and the good that she is doing in the world through her example." AP

Bacharach suicide

BEVERLY HILLS, California—Nikki Bacharach, daughter of songwriter Burt Bacharach and actress Angie Dickinson, committed suicide, Bacharach and Dickinson said in a statement Friday.

Nikki Bacharach, 40, suffered from Asperger's Disorder, a form of autism. She killed herself Thursday night at her condominium in Thousand Oaks, said Linda Dozoretz, a spokeswoman for the family.

"She quietly and peacefully committed suicide to escape the ravages to her brain brought on by Asperger's," the statement said.

Nikki Bacharach died of suffocation using a plastic bag and helium, said Mike Feiler of the Ventura County coroner's office.

RUSHES

Born prematurely in 1966, Lea Nikki Bacharach studied geology at Cal Lutheran University, but could not pursue a career in the field because of poor eyesight.

"She loved kitties, and earthquakes, glacial calving, meteor showers, science, blue skies and sunsets, and Tahiti," the statement said.

Nikki was the only child of Burt Bacharach, 77, and Dickinson, 75, who were married from 1965 to 1981. *AP*

Happy with Madonna

MADONNA and adopted son David

LILONGWE—Malawi's government is happy with the way pop diva Madonna is looking after a one-year-old Malawian boy after her plans to adopt the child last year caused a storm of controversy, an official said on Friday.

Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare Adrina Mchiela told Reuters the government is satisfied so far at the way Madonna is looking after David Banda.

"We have been monitoring her and so far we see a loving mother in Madonna and David is very fine... the father should not be worried," Mchiela said.

Yohane Banda, David's father, this week said he wanted to talk to Madonna and find out how the child is doing.

David Banda, whose mother had died, was living in an orphanage and his father—who initially voiced some questions about the process—later said he supported it. *Reuters*

Lighten up—Drew B

DRE
BAR

NEW YORK—Drew Barrymore wants everybody to lighten up.

"You know, it's all just humor," the 31-year-old actress says in an interview in the February issue of Harper's Bazaar magazine, on newsstands Jan. 16. "Don't take life so seriously. Don't take fashion too seriously. Don't take the movie industry too seriously. Don't take love and your relationship so ... heavy all the time."

She continues: "Laugh, laugh, laugh. Life is like high school and it's small and everybody talks about everybody, so just laugh ..."

Barrymore, a once party-hearty girl who fa-

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G4	1 ROB-B-HOOD	2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	3 THX BLOOD DIAMOND GUARANTEED SEATS	
G4	4 ERAGON	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8	6 ERAGON	7 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
GB1	1 BLOOD DIAMOND	2 ERAGON		
GB3	1 THX ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX BLOOD DIAMOND GUARANTEED SEATS		
GB3	3 ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	4 ROB-B-HOOD GUARANTEED SEATS	5 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC	1 THX ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BLOOD DIAMOND		
ATC	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	
ACC	1 ERAGON	2 BLOOD DIAMOND	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 FEAST
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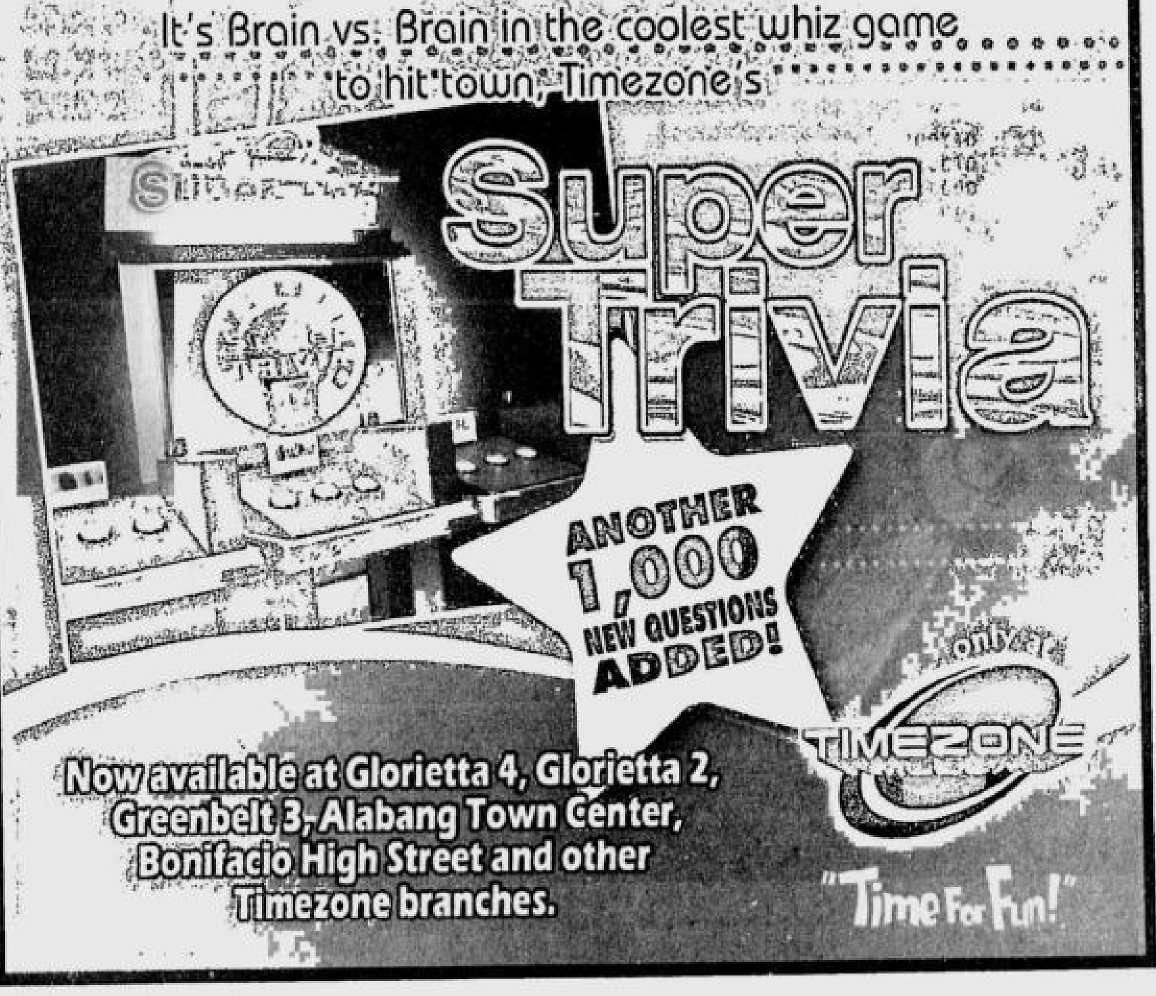
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"Time For Fun!"

mously flashed her breasts at late-night TV talk show host David Letterman, knows what it is like to be talked about. So what is her advice for Lindsay Lohan, whose wild child ways are tabloid fodder?

"I know Lindsay, and I like her very much," Barrymore says. "You just have to try to be as graceful as you can. You know, you flub, you flub. And that's life. ... I think, do what you want, just be professional."
AP

This is news stuff?

LINDSAY LOHAN

Speaking of Lindsay Lohan, this merited a story by the Associated Press.

From New York, AP reported:

Lindsay Lohan was to have surgery to remove her appendix, her publicist, Leslie Sloane Zelnik, said Thursday.

Zelnik declined to give details. In an e-mail response to a query by The Associated Press, Zelnik said the 20-year-old actress was "having her appendix removed. She is resting comfortably."

Mullally's show axed

LOS ANGELES—Former "Will & Grace" star Megan Mullally's syndicated talk-variety show is finished after less than five months.

The low-rated "The Megan Mullally Show" has been canceled and production has been halted, NBC Universal Television Distribution said Wednesday. Original and repeat episodes of the show, which debuted last September, will air through January.

"I am extremely proud of the show we created and am thankful for the passion and tireless efforts of (executive producer) Corin Nelson and the entire staff," Mullally said in a statement Wednesday issued by NBC Universal.

Mullally, who played the outrageous and spoiled socialite Karen on "Will & Grace," was lauded by NBC Universal as "one of the most talented people in our business," and the company thanked her for her "tireless commitment."

A replacement for the show has yet to be announced.
AP

W
RYMORE

No hard feelings

NEW YORK— Cris Judd has a new dancing show. So does Jennifer Lopez. So how does Judd feel competing with his ex-wife?

"I would never wish for something to be a failure," the 37-year-old dancer-choreographer told AP Television in a recent interview.

"Everyone's trying to get by and everyone's trying to do their best and you can only hope for the best and you can wish for the best for someone," he continued. "So, hopefully both shows will be successful and they can both coincide and we'll have a great time."

Judd's show is the reality competition "Dirty Dancing" on the Women's Entertainment cable channel, airing Wednesdays at 10 p.m. EST. Lopez is producing MTV's "DanceLife," about six aspiring dancers struggling to make it. The eight-episode series premieres Jan. 15 at 10:30 p.m.
AP

JENNIFER LOPEZ AP

Parting shot

Our parting shot is from a statement issued by the UN World Food Programme on hunger.

The statement is in relation to the agency's new public service announcement featuring two cast members of "Blood Diamond," Djimon Hounsou and Jennifer Connelly.

The actors ask in the PSA: "What is so powerful that it can make you overcome your greatest fear...turn your brother into an enemy...and leave wounds that scar long after the fighting is over? What is so potent, it passes effortlessly from mother to child...from generation to generation?

The answer, according to the WFP: "Hunger."

Says Neil Gallagher, WFP communications director: "Hunger is often the root cause of desperate acts by desperate people. Cinema is a very powerful medium to help generate greater awareness and concern about hunger, an issue largely ignored and little understood in the western world, where most people are far more worried about their waistlines."

Adds "Blood Diamond" director Edward Zwick: "Hunger is bad governance. When you have in place some system that that is not enriching the lives of people whose country is being exploited, that leads to hunger."

SYLVESTER STALLONE

Stallone defends boxing

MEXICO CITY—Sylvester Stallone defended boxing, praised the hard work of Mexicans and dished out some jabs against US plans to build a wall on its southern border, as the 60-year-old actor visited Mexico City to promote his sixth prizefighting film, "Rocky Balboa."

Stallone said Thursday that his latest episode of the Rocky saga shows an ordinary man fighting back against life's difficulties represented by his stronger ring opponents.

"It's like bullfighting or certain sports where you understand the brutality," Stallone told reporters. "The thing is you have two men who are prepared; two men who have trained for this and know exactly what they're doing. It's not like two strong men attacking strangers."
AP

EVA MENDES

Eva Mendes resists stereotyping

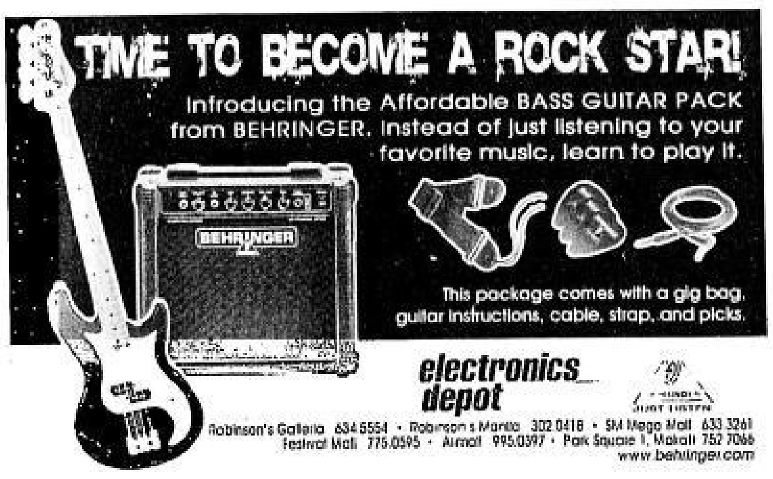
HONG KONG—Actress Eva Mendes says she first resisted a part in an upcoming movie also featuring Mark Wahlberg, Joaquin Phoenix and Robert Duvall because it was too stereotypical, but finally relented when the director agreed to adjust her role.

The Cuban-American actress said in the January issue of Prestige Hong Kong magazine that she rejected the role in "We Own the Night" for six months before agreeing to it.

Mendes said director James Gray changed her mind by modifying her character.

"He said we would collaborate and he wanted me for the part," she said.
AP

Feuding lovebirds discuss problems on TV like no one was listening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ERAGON 2:00 / 4:20 / 6:40 / 9:00
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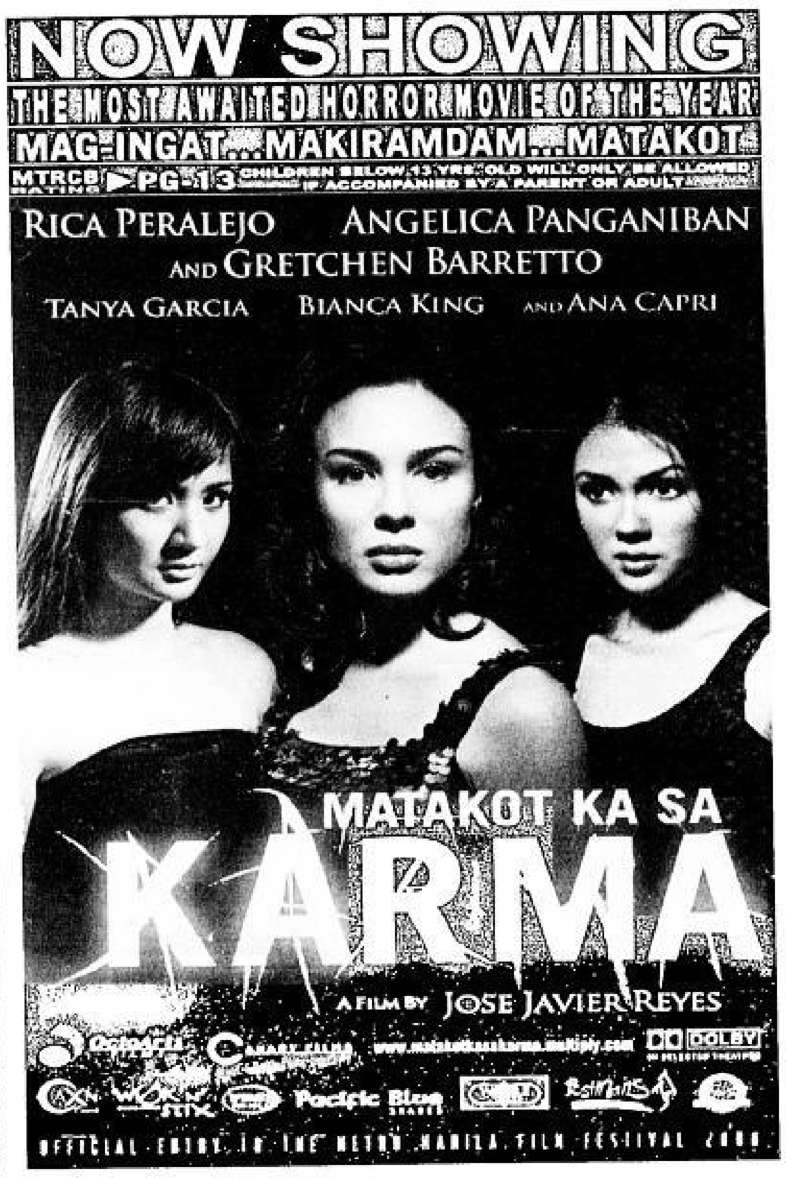
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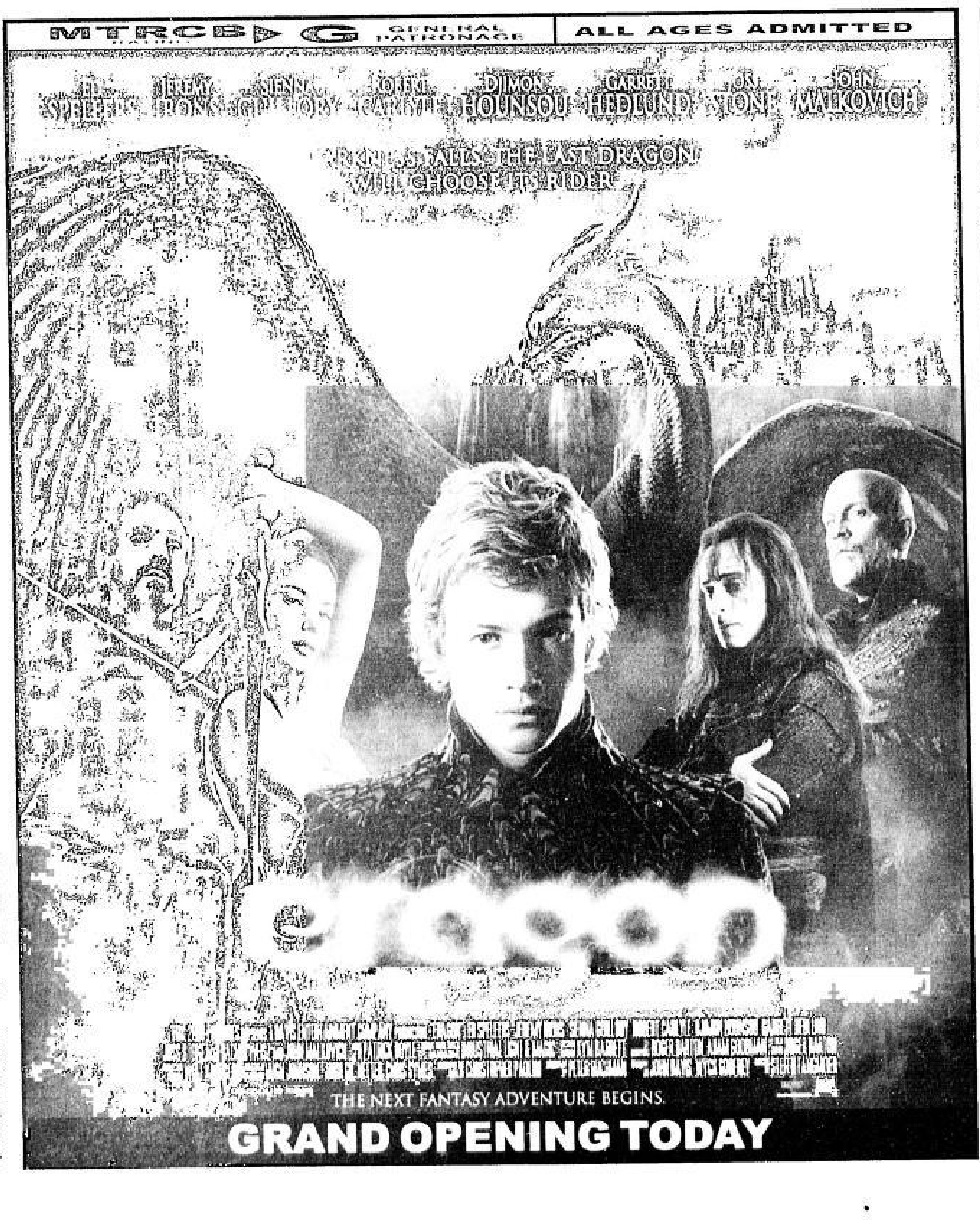
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MANO PO 5: GUA AI DI G 12:30,3:00,5:30,8:00,10:30	ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH G 12:40,3:05,5:30,7:45,10:20	KASAL, KASALI, KASALO PG13 1:40,3:50,6:00,8:10,10:20

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	Feb. 16 & 17, 2007	Passion Y Fuego	8:00 PM
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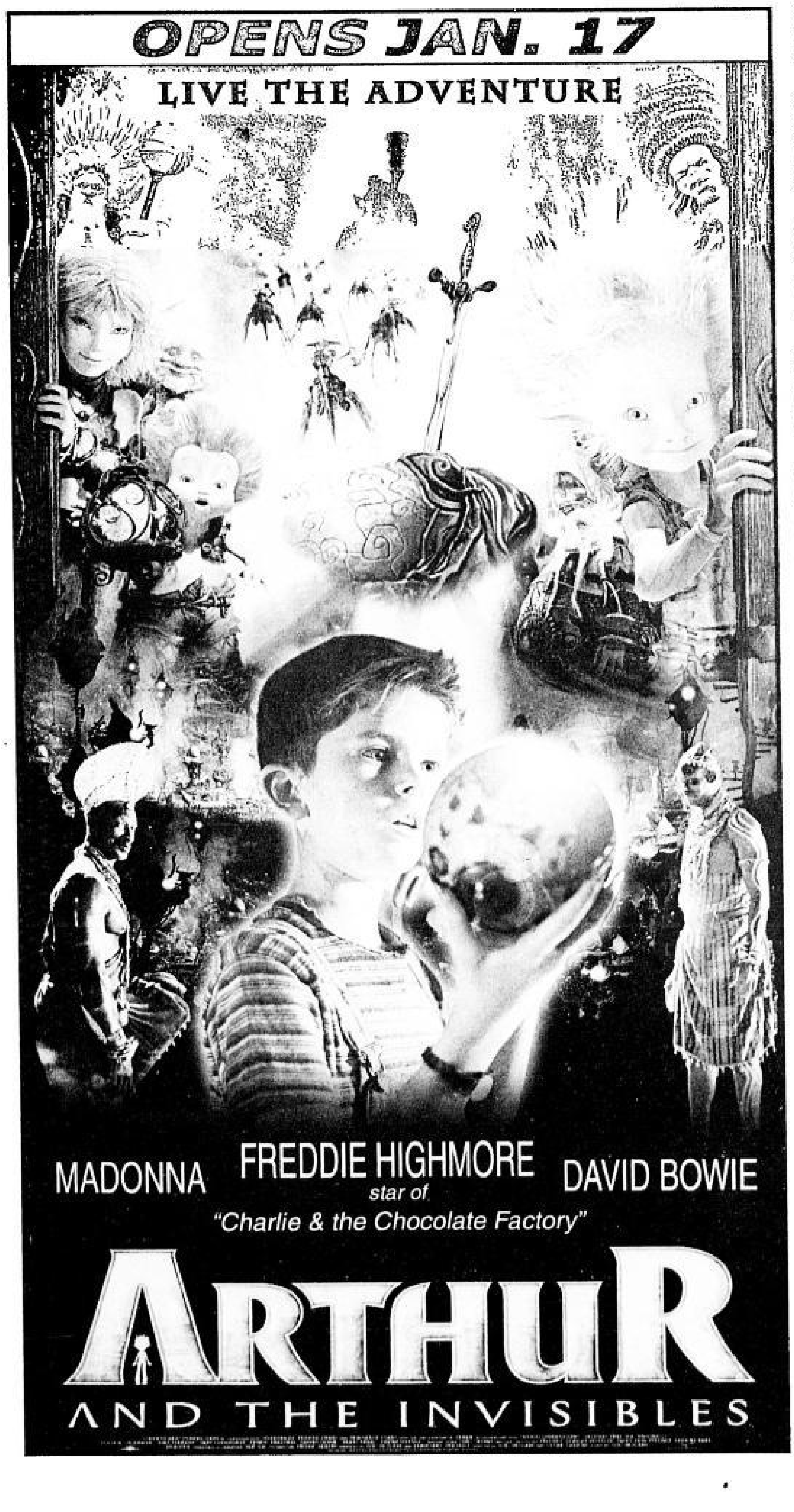


CALLALILY performs at the Inquirer anniversary program recently.

RYAN LIM

Callalily boys live their dream

TAKE FIVE

'We got our name from a bread *na may leche flan sa loob*. We planned to change it after one gig, but we never got the chance'

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

THE MEMBERS OF RISING ALTERNA-pop band Callalily are an unassuming bunch, but that façade belies their collective ability to rock, and rock audiences with them.

The five young men, most of whom study music in a Manila university, are "normal" 18- and 19-year-olds who resolve to be humble amid the successes they're currently experiencing. Their debut album, "Destination XYZ," is "doing well," they said. Aside from decent radio airplay, the well-rotated music videos of their songs "Stars" and "Take My Hand," have been helpful in getting Callalily noticed.

Vocalist Kean Cipriano, rhythm guitarist Tatsi Jamnague, lead guitarist Alden Acosta, drummer Lem Belaro and bassist Aaron Ricafrente agree that they can be like playful kids when together, but that creating songs and working together are matters they take seriously.

Instrumentally and vocally, "Destination XYZ" sounds like a cross between the early works of gifted local bands River Maya and Violent Playground, with noticeable hints of contemporary foreign rock act influences thrown in. But points of comparison aside, Callalily's songs are distinctly clean and mature-sounding, even when they predominantly speak of young love and frustrations.

Six of the 12 songs in the collection are in Filipino, performed just as energetically and convincingly as the English numbers. Style-wise, the members are letting their music evolve naturally.

"*Nasa* alternative *pa rin siya*," says Aaron. "*Iba-iba ang* influence *namin sa* music *eh*, so the result is a mix of that."

What does "Callalily" mean, and when was the group formed?

Kean: We got the name from a bread *na may leche flan sa loob*. Tatsi and I formed a band in high school. It didn't have a name so we used that.

Alden: After the gig, we were supposed to change it but we didn't get the chance, so we just stuck with it. The band was formed for just one gig. But after that, *tuloy-tuloy na*. We got a fundraising gig at Camp Crame. Luckily, we met our manager, Darwin Hernandez.

Kean: Before we had a manager yet, *kami-kami lang*, we looked for gigs, we sold tickets. We've been together since July 2005—that's a year and a couple of months.

How collaborative has the songwriting process been?

Kean: For this album, I wrote five songs. Lem wrote three; Alden wrote two. Our manager wrote two. I write songs, and then I present them to my band mates. They listen, and then make suggestions. When we arrange a song, *doon na lumalabas 'yung kanya-kanyang* ideas. *Doon na nabubuo*.

What attracts listeners to your songs?

Tatsi: Our songs, *parang totoong buhay*. They're based on experiences. So we connect with teenagers and people who understand the emotions we want to convey. Honest *'yung* songs.

What exactly inspired "Stars," then?

Lem: Actually, that's my first composition, and it's one of our first songs as a band. *Ang dami niyang pinagdaanang* arrangement. *Sobrang dami*, as in *lahat ng* genre. It's about a relationship that you regret because it ended. I was able to write that, because I gave up my love life when I got so busy with the band.

So what's the song in "XYZ" that appeals to you most and why?

Kean: *Ako*, "Pasan" *ang* current favorite *ko*. It's an upbeat song. Lem wrote that; it was inspired by "Footprints in the Sand." At first it was kind of a Christian song, but we decided to make it broader, to make it also about friendship.

Tatsi: "Takipsilim," because the song is very emotional. Darwin wrote it. When you hear it, it can make you sentimental.

Alden: For me it's "Magbalik" because the melody is very catchy and I couldn't get it out of my head for a long time. Lem also wrote it.

Lem: "Take My Hand." That was the last song we arranged. *Sobrang* steady. It was the song where I felt that we matured.

Aaron: "Dream" because it has a happy, upbeat melody. You'll dance to it, and there's the part where people can easily sing along to."

Has it been easy to adjust to the demands of Callalily's schedule?

Kean: I was a basketball player in high school. I used to be a varsity player until I played once with a band. I thought, *ang sarap pala tumugtog*. Now that I'm in college, I realized that I really wanted to do music. I couldn't shake it off. I love writing songs, too. *Parang* full-time students *din kami. Aral sa umaga*, gig *sa gabi*. Self-discipline *lang kung paano iba*-balance. We travel for free, all expenses paid, then we just play. We're very happy with what we're doing.

How different are your fans?

Kean: Everyone can relate to us, but our crowd is mostly made up of students. We're surprised because they're very supportive. We never imagined we'd have this kind of support. We call them "Callalistas."

Alden: They go to unimaginable heights just to show us that they care. They tell us things like, "*May* class *ako bukas pero nanood ako*!"

Kean: *Ang sarap na parang nagiging part kami ng buhay nila, nakaka*-inspire, like we're role models. It's hard sometimes; you're very careful so you don't make mistakes. We have young and old fans.

Alden: An English teacher e-mailed me about our music and thanked us! There are those who are young at heart who enjoy our music, so that's great.

Have there been weird experiences?

Kean: There are some people who get possessive. *Naglalakad ka, kukunin ang mukha mo, tapos hahalikan ka sa* lips! Sometimes, when they get too excited, they pinch you everywhere. One time, someone stole my bonnet. Lem lost his sticks, too.

Alden: We try to understand them all. Sometimes it's very hard. We're thankful for every single one of them.

After becoming visible in the past year, what has Callalily discovered about creating and sharing music?

Kean: It's a dream, and luckily, we got into the scene at the right time. We've learned how to respect and be friends with other bands. We discovered that we really love doing this, and it makes us happy. There are responsibilities; you have to practice, you have to be really good. Personally, I'm learning that the more successful we get, the more we should be humble. We're like a band of brothers; when we play, *may puso*.

Alden: The more successful you get, the more people would think you're rock stars or something. You have to try harder not to be that way.

Lem: Being in a band doesn't only mean you have to be skilled in playing music. It's a group effort. You have to know your band mates and trust them.

'Peter Pan' in Manila

KID FIT

CHILDREN'S HOUR INVITES THE public to watch "Peter Pan" on Jan. 13, 2 p.m. at the Main Theater of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Filipino children are the beneficiaries of this special show.

The Jan. 13 staging launches the Manila tour of J. M. Barrie's classic, bringing new life to the characters of Captain Hook and his pirate gang, the Jolly Roger, Peter Pan and the Lost Boys in faraway Neverland.

New characters have also been added—the Fairy Queen, The Voice (backed by a live choir of 16 voices) and Tiger Lily's Trackers.

"PETER Pan"

West End actors and performers will be joined by Filipino children who auditioned for parts in the musical.

Tickets are at P2,900, P2,400, P1,800, P900 and P500. Discounts are available for groups, students and senior citizens.

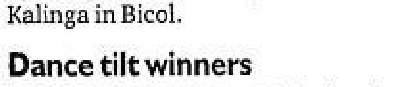
For inquiries and reservations, call 894-1663 or 752-1179 to 80.

'Beauty and the Beast'

The Ateneo Children's Theater will stage Disney's version of the classic fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast" on Jan. 26 and 27 and Feb. 2 and 3, 6 p.m. at the Irwin Theater.

The tale is about a prince who has been turned into a hideous beast by a woman whom he spurned because of her looks.

The cast is composed of 150 grade schoolers from Ateneo, Miriam and St. Bridget, with Carlo Arnold Duay and Ramon Angelo Bayani alternating in the lead role of Beast and Maria Celina Bengson and Stephanie Dos Santos as Belle.



"BEAUTY and the Beast"

The proceeds will go to Gawad Kalinga in Bicol.

Dance tilt winners

Colegio de Santa Rosa Makati, winner of the first Crissa Teen Synergy Dance Competition in 2004, was named champion of this year's all-female dance contest.

The group bagged P200,000, a plaque and scholarship grants from the Asian College of Science and Technology (ACSAT).

Second placer was the International School of Manila, recipient of a P100,000 and a plaque.

Last year's grand winner, School of Saint Anthony, placed third, with P50,000 and a plaque.

Scratching the itch to bitch

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

...and how much longer will fans like Angel Locsin?

THE YULETIDE SEASON IS SUPPOSED TO engender warm, roseate feelings of peace and harmony, but **Donald Trump** and **Rosie O'Donnell** obviously prefer to scratch the itch to bitch.

O'Donnell criticized Trump for his kid-glove treatment of a misbehaving Miss USA, and fiercely lampooned him on "The View," the TV show she co-hosts with **Barbara Walters** and other feisty women.

Stung, Trump lashed back, hitting not just O'Donnell, but also her girlfriend, provoking another round of insults and mutual threats of lawsuits. Viewers welcomed the legal move, because it would compel the vicious combatants to shut up.

Instructively, this is Trump's second big "catfight" in recent memory, the first being his hiss fest with **Martha Stewart** over the flop that her version of "The Apprentice" turned out to be.

Is "The Donald" acquiring a reputation for shrilly feuding with women? Far better for him to be rich than to bitch, so he should instantly desist, before he gets thoroughly Trumped.

Alas, Trump and O'Donnell aren't alone in bitching it up this season. Other contentious contenders include stars pitted against each other by media people raring for a bloody brawl, and bitchy reporters like the one who recently asked Paris Hilton what her acceptance speech would sound like if she were given a "Worst Actress of the Year" award.

Well, Paris isn't called a rich bitch for nothing, so she went up in flames, and eviscerated the catty interviewer with her rapier tongue and stiletto glare.

Change of image

ANGEL Locsin is only 20 years old, but she's been a star for some show biz seasons, so she can't be blamed for feeling antsy about how her TV-film career is going. It's going great guns, but that's for now, and tomorrow is always an unknown quotient, especially, as far as stars are concerned.

How much longer will fans enjoy her as a "sweet" teen idol? Twenty is as 20 does, so does that mean her choice of roles should mature, too? It's happened with other young stars; why should she be the exception that proves the rule?

That's why, for her new Valentine's Day movie with **Richard Gutierrez**, Angel has agreed to do some romantic scenes with more spice than sweetness. It helps a lot that Richard is a perfect gentleman who can be trusted to keep the spicier love scenes as professionally acted as possible.

Before Angel decided to make young-adult revisions on her screen image, she was beaten to the punch by the likes of **Angelica Panganiban** in "Santa-Santita" and **Katrina Halili** in "Gigil." So, she isn't exactly breaking new ground, just keeping up with the competition.

What about Richard, is *his* image in for some sexy updating? Nope. For some strange reason, male stars aren't as affected by adult considerations as their female counterparts. In fact, some male leads play it cute and frisky even into their 30s.

In any case, Richard is so boy-next-door in projection that he probably wouldn't be believable in heavily adult scenes. From "cute" to "acute" is a shift that only a few actors can be expected to pull off. In the US, think **Leonardo DiCaprio**, not **Elijah Wood**. Here at home, think **Polo Ravales**, not Richard Gutierrez.

'Doom'

AT 9 P.M. on Jan. 13, HBO screens, "Doom," starring **Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.** Set far into the future, the film follows a group of hardened marines to a research facility on the planet Mars, where they must destroy an army of nightmarish monsters created by an experiment gone horribly awry.

ROSIE O'Donnell vs Donald Trump

Theater Lobby Display

REPRESENTING the Philippines, Robinsons Galleria Movieworld won the Asian Division Grand Prize of the recently concluded Theater Lobby Display Sweepstakes for the Disney/Pixar film, "Cars," organized by Buena Vista International, beating all other Asian countries in competition.

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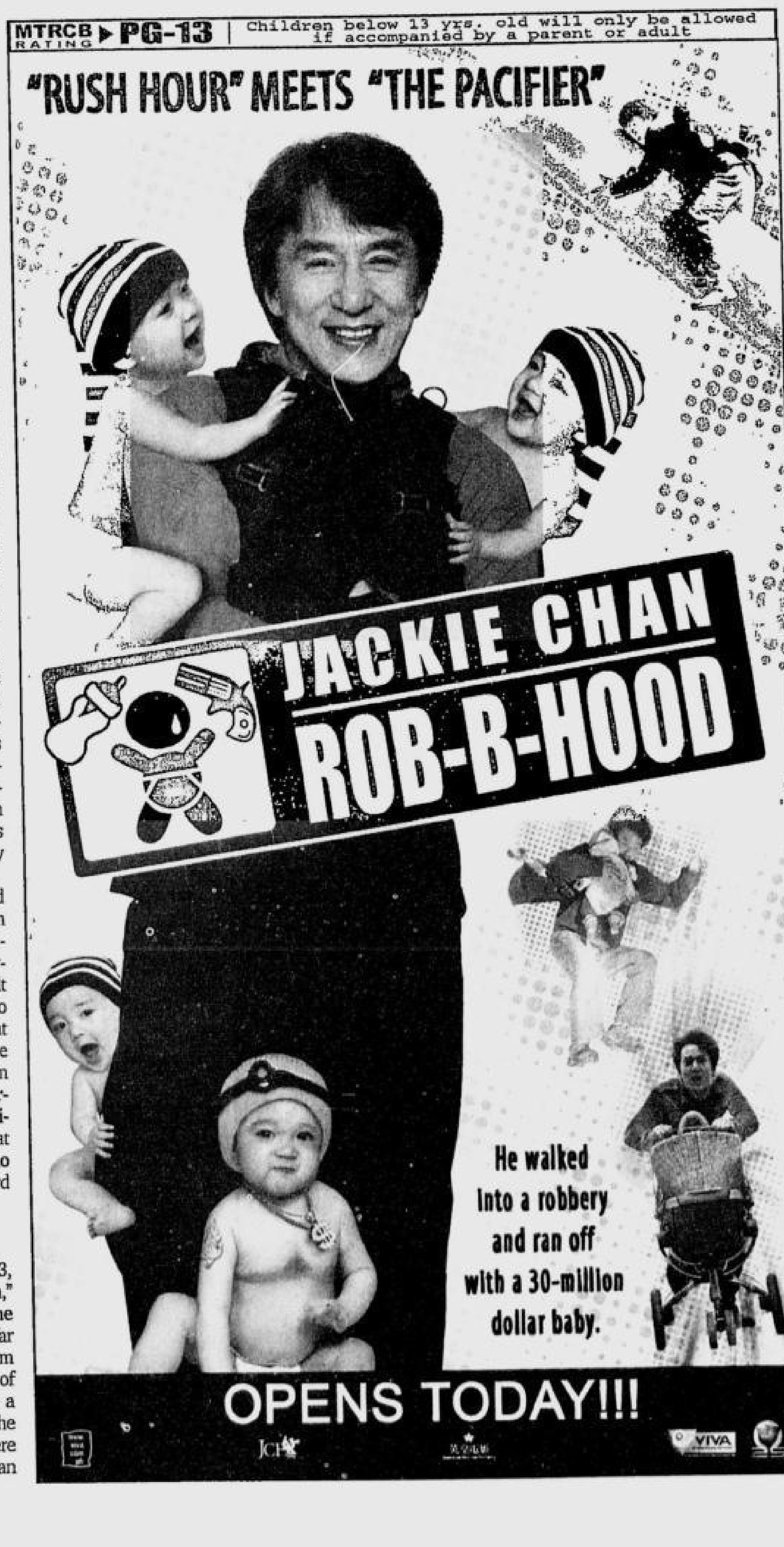

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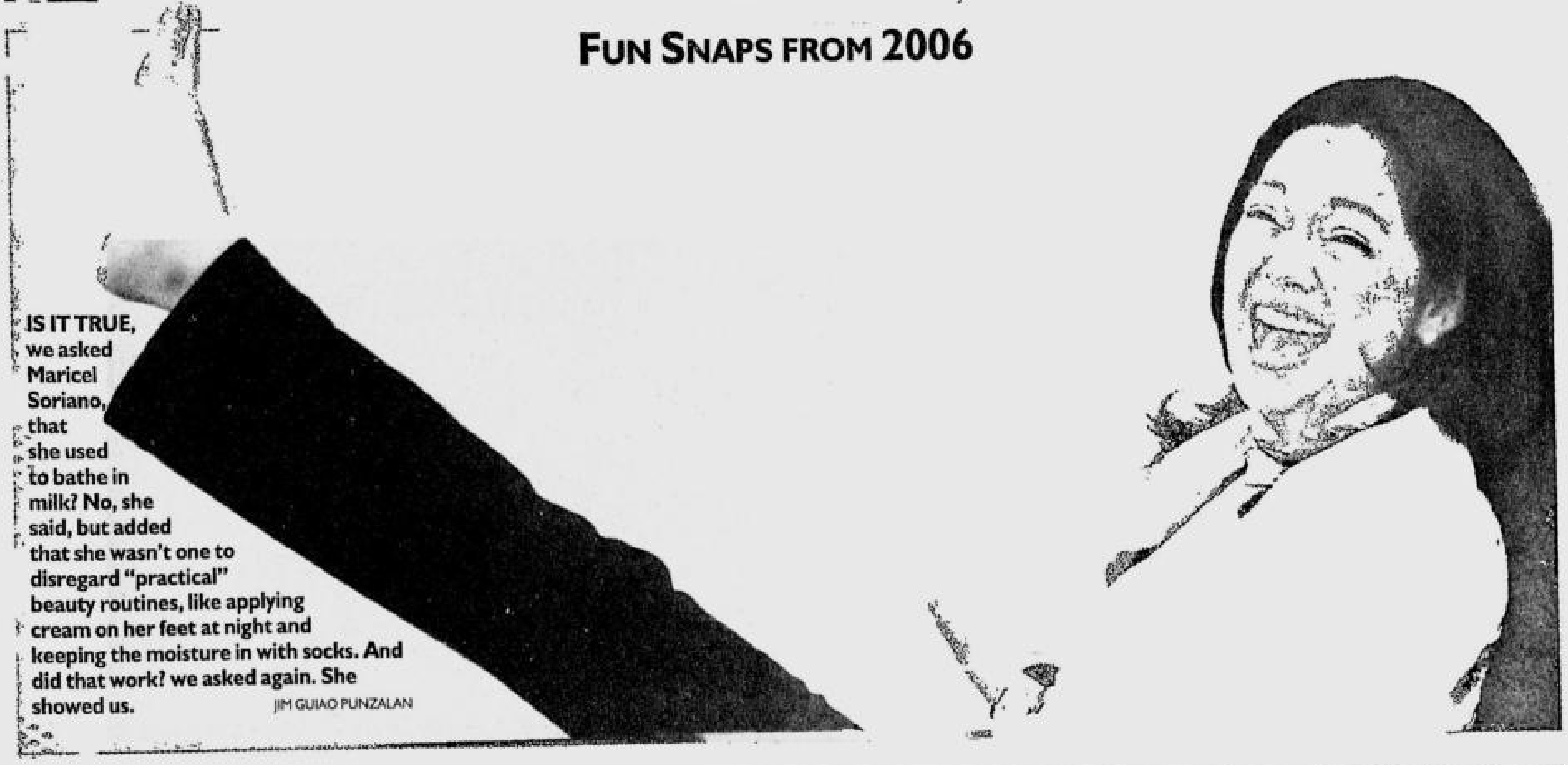

IS IT TRUE, we asked Maricel Soriano, that she used to bathe in milk? No, she said, but added that she wasn't one to disregard "practical" beauty routines, like applying cream on her feet at night and keeping the moisture in with socks. And did that work? we asked again. She showed us. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

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OPENING TODAY

Eragon

Stars Edward Speelers, Sienna Guillory, Jeremy Irons, John Malkovich

Directed by Stefan Fangmeier

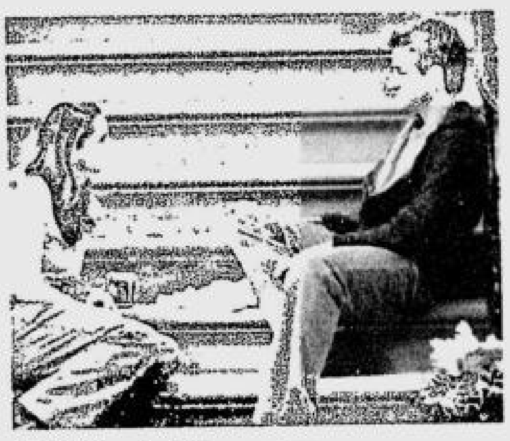
Based on a series of novels by Christopher Paolini, this fantasy spectacle follows the exploits of a farm boy (Speelers) who becomes a Dragon Rider, "a high-flying defender of freedom and peace." Gene Seymour of Newsday says he's reminded of "Star Wars" crossed with "Dragonheart." "The director's background… in visual effects and digital projection ensures a handsome-looking dragon." John Monaghan of Detroit Free Press comments that "for all the promise of breathing fire and clashing swords, [it] doesn't generate any real heat… Surprisingly, the special effects are just so-so." Kyle Smith of New York Post says it "harks back to olden times: the 1950s." Carrie Rickey of Philadelphia Inquirer opines that "like the book, the movie version is for and about adolescents."

Blood Diamond

Stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly, Djimon Hounsou, Arnold Vosloo

Directed by Edward Zwick

A cynical diamond smuggler (DiCaprio), a fiery magazine writer (Connelly) and the beleaguered father of a child-guerrilla (Hounsou) stumble in and out of the war zone in Sierra Leone in 1999—when gems are smuggled out of the African country and sold to European buyers for arms money. John Hartl of Newsweek raves that the director and his cinematographer Eduardo Serra "create several thrilling action sequences [and] the actors consistently make the moments believable by emphasizing the touches of ambiguity in the script." David Denby of The New Yorker asserts: "Without sensationalizing, Zwick shows us the workings of a recurring phenomenon that goes beyond heartbreak to the most sordid tragedy." Ty Burr of Boston Globe states that the film "wears both its social conscience and its Hollywood calculation on its sleeve."



Griffin & Phoenix

Stars Dermot Mulroney, Amanda Peet, Blair Brown, Lois Smith

Directed by Ed Stone

A remake of a 1976 TV-movie starring Peter Falk and Jill Clayburgh, this "terminally maudlin dramedy" tells the story of a divorced dad (Mulroney) who is diagnosed with an inoperable cancer at the same time that he meets his soul mate (Peet). Michael Rechtshaffen of Hollywood Reporter rants that the "big-screen version has all the engaging momentum of a 102-minute dirge… everything about the film lacks vitality, from the lifeless direction to the anemic performances." David Nusair of Reel Film Reviews dismisses it as "an uninvolving piece of work… [with] an absurdly sentimental and melodramatic screenplay." MoviePie.com observes that this "poignantly funny love story [has a] secret [that's] so blindingly obvious."

Rob-B-Hood

Stars Jacky Chan, Michael Hui, Louis Koo, Charlene Choi

Directed by Benny Chan

Compulsive gamblers and thieves (Chan and Koo) end up caring for a baby that they earlier rescued and must kidnap for a mobster and his delusional wife. Jay Weissberg of Variety asserts that the "caper… plays to the jovial action star's strengths, while saddling him with a helpless-men-and-a-baby formula long past its sell-by date." Lee Marshall of Screen Daily insists that "there's good buddy chemistry between Koo and Chan… [in spite of] some sloppily shot bridging scenes." Felix Cheong of Channel News Asia points out that Chan's high jinks are a rehash of Arnold Schwarzenegger's in "Kindergarten Cop" and Vin Diesel's in "The Pacifier"—"it's a diaper-disaster movie… All the gags you've seen before in 'Three Men and a Baby.'"